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The Development of 'Meaning' in Literary Theory: A Comparative Critical Study

by

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Abstract

This research project studies different approaches to the question of meaning in literary texts in medieval Islamic critical traditions and modern Western literary criticism. Based on a comparative analysis, the dissertation attempts to explain each theory in its own terms, to find the commonalities and differences of the handling of such a question by literary theories, to establish a dialogue between the theories to understand them better and in wider terms. Thus, the dissertation also analyzes some texts by looking at them through the lenses of different theories.

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Introduction

This dissertation takes up the notion of meaning as handled by literary theory. My point of departure is the assumption that each theory is a way of understanding texts. For example, structuralism is a way of understanding literary texts and it is different from the other ways of understanding texts such as deconstruction and formalism. While the differences between theories vary, for instance, the differences between structuralism and formalism are in many ways slighter than the differences between structuralism and deconstruction or Marxism, each theory has a distinctive way of understanding texts; and this is what makes it a theory or a school in the long list of literary theories and schools.

This assumption is not applicable only to western literary theories. I claim that classical Arabic literary theories are also different ways of understanding literary texts. For instance, among the things that I would like to show in this dissertation is how ‘Abd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī, a prominent medieval Arabic critic, attempted to redirect the critics’ focus to meanings as opposed to utterances via his theory of *النظم* *al-naẓm*, arrangement, which he presents as an approach to weigh and evaluate the eloquence of texts. I also would like to show how another medieval critic, i.e., Ḥāzim al-Qarṭājannī asserts the importance of the appropriate structuration and interrelatedness between the meanings of poetic texts in order to achieve eloquence and effectiveness.

Thus, each critic attempts to develop his way of understanding, generally, the understanding of a text. Understanding a text is a process of knowing what a text *means*

because to understand something is to know what it *means*. For example, if I would like to understand the word “gravity,” I would google it to know what it means. No doubt, this general knowledge is still different from professional knowledge but both a physicist and I would share some understanding of “gravity.” However, in the context of textual analysis, ‘what it means’ is quite an ambiguous phrase, even though it is obvious that when we read something we attempt to understand ‘what it means.’

‘What a text means’ includes what its vocabularies mean, what each sentence means, what each part in it means and even what it means in relation to other texts and contexts. The meaning of a text would then include different layers of understanding, i.e., understanding the meaning and the meaning of meaning, or what critics usually refer to as the significance or meaningfulness of a text, which is another level of meaning that is beyond the meanings of words and sentences (see for example, Benjamin; Iser; Hirsch). As if each literary text has two levels of meaning. One level is the meaning of words and sentences. The other level is the meaning that stems, for instance, from the relationship between different episodes in a text or the musicality of a text or the relationship between a text and another text or the indirect implications of the first level of meaning, etc. So, meaning now is not something someone checks in the dictionary or the simple understanding of sentences. A critical study of meaning thus studies the process of meaning-making, i.e., how authors make meanings in their texts and how readers make meanings from the texts.

In this dissertation, I use the concept “meaning” in a manner that encompasses these different levels of meaning. When saying that each literary theory is a way of understanding texts, I mean a way of understanding the meaning-making of literary texts. That is what I

would like to look at through a comparative literary lens. How do medieval Arabic and modern Western literary theories approach the “meaning” of literary texts? To what extent are their approaches similar or different?

The answers to these questions is what I would like to conclude this dissertation with. My comparison of different classical Arabic and modern Western theories is not aimed only at spotting the similarities and differences between them, nor is it aimed at manipulating them so that they appear to be harmonized with each other. Rather, I would like to analyze the different conditions of meaning and the interpretive operations each theory presents.

I have chosen two representatives from each side of my comparison. On the Arabic side: ‘Abd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī (d. 471 AH – 1078 AD) and Ḥāzīm al-Qartājannī (d. 684 AH – 1285 AD), and on the Western side: Roman Jakobson (d. 1982) and Jacques Derrida (d. 2004).

Both al-Jurjānī and al-Qartājannī are usually regarded in Arabic literary scholarship as the culmination of medieval Arabic rhetoric and literary criticism (Abū Mūsā, *Madkhal*; Ḥammūdah, *al-Marāyah al-Muqa‘‘arah*; ‘Aṣṣūr).¹ al-Jurjānī is most famous for his theory of *النظم* *al-naẓm*, arrangement, which culminated the debate of *اللفظ والمعنى* (word and meaning). His theory is best presented in his most renowned books *دلائل الإعجاز* *Dalā’il al-I‘jāz* (*The Proofs Of Incapacitation*) and *أسرار البلاغة* *Asrār al-Balāghah* (*The Secrets Of Eloquence*). The backbone of al-Jurjānī’s theory is the notion of relationships between the

¹ Traditionally, Arabic textual analysis is divided in two branches, i.e., rhetoric and literary criticism, the former is said to be about prescribing rules for literary compositions but the latter is about evaluating texts without pre-given rules (Mandūr 328; al-Kawwāz 199-201).

words and the meanings of a text. With this idea, he wanted to reveal the motor of linguistic signification: that it is a process of arrangement, both on the single word level and on the compound words level.

As for al-Qarṭājannī, a late Andalusian critic, he wanted to clarify the artistic problems that invaded literary styles during his time and to illuminate the different ways of making eloquent poetry and speeches; thus, he titled his book: منهاج البلغاء وسراج الأدباء *Minhāj al-Bulaghā' wa Sirāj al-Audabā'* (*The Method of The Eloquent Ones and The Lamp of The Literati*). The third part of the book focuses on studying the structuration of a whole composition and affirms that the eloquence of a text depends upon the idea of التناسب *al-tanāsub* (appropriateness), which forms the pivot around which his book rotates (al-Wahībī 272), showing poets and writers both the rules and chosen examples of eloquent texts. This part of the book represents “one of the neatest and most accurate applications of the book. It opens a gate in the study of poetry, which has not been opened [investigated] yet . . . and it is essential for the comprehension of poetry” (Abū Mūsā, *Taqrīb* 166).

Both critics represent two different approaches to the study of literature in medieval Arabic criticism. For, al-Qarṭājannī, on the one hand, tends to present a logical framework for his theorization of the textual aesthetics, which reflects his influence by Avicenna to whom he sporadically refers and states that his book may be seen as an achievement of what Avicenna wanted to theorize about Arabic poetry (al-Qarṭājannī 61). However, al-Jurjānī, on the other hand, does not share such a logical/Avicennian tendency with al-Qarṭājannī rather he relies on “grammar” as the main premise to the question of eloquence and derives his argumentation from his personal tasting of the texts (Abū al-Sa‘d 378).

Moreover, both critics represent the vast expansion of literary studies in the Arabic-Islamic world as al-Jurjānī was from Gorgan in north Persia and al-Qarṭājannī was from Cartagena in south Andalusia. On parallel, Jakobson and Derrida also represent the wide integration of modern Western literary theory since Jakobson was originally Russian and Derrida was born and raised in Algeria. Such a geographical notice may not have a significance to my argument in this dissertation; however, I thought it is worth mentioning.

Jakobson and Derrida are from distinct schools. The former, on the one hand, represents an aggregation of formalist-structuralist orientation of analysis, and the latter, on the other hand, is famous for his idea of deconstruction, which represents a sharp and radical curve in Western philosophy and literary criticism: a change from the determinacy of context, signified, intention and meaning to the irreducibility and dissemination of contexts, signifieds, intentions and meanings.

Why studying structuralism and deconstruction? Language is a question that, I think, has occupied the Western mentality in the field of humanities more than any other question in the twentieth century. Most literary theories, such as structuralism, reception theory, formalism, hermeneutics, deconstruction and reader response are based on a discussion of the problem of language. Even though Marxism and psychoanalysis may seem quite independent from such a problem, they, especially psychoanalysis, have their own ideologies concerning language and meaning.

From another angle, one can easily find a strong relationship between structuralism, formalism and new criticism as the three of them are concerned with the structure or the form of literature. Reception theory, hermeneutics and reader response are all within a short distance from the last set of theories. For example, Barthes who was one of the most

prominent figures of reception theory was also a member of French structuralism. However, deconstruction stands alone as a unique approach to literature that is commonly perceived as a reaction against structuralism and its siblings; therefore, it is also named post-structuralism.

In other words, I find that structuralism and deconstruction represent two major poles of Western literary theory during the twentieth century. Thus, I chose to bring these two representatives in a comparative study with the two selected Arabic theories that – as shown above – also represent two distinct approaches in the medieval Arabic literary theory.

From the structuralist side, I choose Roman Jakobson, who is both a corner stone of Russian formalism and also a prominent structuralist whose inspiration by F. Saussure's structural linguistics and Charles Peirce's semiotics influences his approach to the study of literature. I particularly focus on his notion of parallelism, which represents the mine of poetic artifice for him (*Language in Literature* 145). In fact, some have called for comparative studies of parallelism across different literary and critical traditions because it shows to be a universal literary feature especially in oral literatures (Fox 41).

I do not think I need to justify my choice of Derrida as a representative of deconstruction since he is its founder and its most notable figure. Among the many arguments and notions Derrida developed in his numerous writings, I only take up his general notion of *différance* and his complicated understanding of writing as *différance*. I would like to look at these arguments as articulated in *Of Grammatology* and *Signature Event Context*.

Différance is the basis of Derrida's deconstruction because it breaks away from Saussure's idea of *difference* as the motor of linguistic signification, enabling Derrida to present his groundbreaking views about meaning and the dissemination of meanings as manifested in writing. This is the crux of Derrida's engagement and critique of what he terms "logocentrism," which he attributes to Western thought up until Saussure. Thus, I would like to concentrate my discussion of Derrida on these two points, i.e., différance and writing.

These four critics, i.e., al-Jurjānī, al-Qarṭājannī, Jakobson and Derrida are the main figures of this dissertation. I intend to compare and contrast al-Jurjānī's theory to Derrida's theory on the one hand, and al-Qarṭājannī's theory to Jakobson's theory on the other. By these comparisons, I aim at finding commonalities and differences between these critics' tackling of the question of "meaning."

By no means do I claim to be doing something nobody has ever done. In effect, there are numbers of critics that I think have attracted me to choose the topic of this dissertation. Notably, I would mention Culler, Ḥammūdah, 'Abd al-Wāḥid and 'Aṣḥūr. All four produced what seems to me very valuable insights into the idea of meaning and comparative criticism. Culler said a word that I think is very thought-provoking. It was especially influential for me to think about "meaning" as a problematic matter within the Western criticism itself. He says, "something can have meaning only, if there are other meanings, it cannot have" (252). The revealing simplicity and straightforwardness, but also profoundness of this statement make it sound like a key to all literary theories that look for the meaning of a text. Was this what Derrida and structuralism wanted to say, I asked myself when I first read it. Would Arabic literary criticism agree with this statement, I also

asked myself. The outcome of these two and other questions was that this simple statement very much problematizes the notion of meaning.

Ḥammūdah was a prominent modern Egyptian critic, who studied and taught literature in Egypt and the US. In the last six years of his life, he wrote his famous critical trilogy: *al-Marāyah al-Muḥaddabah (The Convex Mirrors)*, *al-Marāyah al-Muqa‘‘arah (The Concave Mirrors)* and *al-Khurūj min al-Tīh (The Exit From The Stray)*, in which he compares and contrasts classical Arabic literary theory to modern Western literary theory – in general – in order to show the problem that modern Arabic literary theory has, that is, being hovering between these two critical traditions, neither here nor there, betwixt and between. He then suggests a return to the Arabic critical heritage to derive from it a modern Arabic critical framework rather than importing it from the West.

As for ‘Abd al-Wāḥid, he compares the German traditions of reception theory as presented by Iser, Jauss and Ingarden, to what he considers to be similar medieval Arabic approaches to literary criticism and argues that these approaches seem to be – virtual – references to the modern reception theory (see for example, 9, 24, 35).

As for ‘Aṣḥūr, he produced a profound discussion of the medieval Arabic conception of poetry. In this context, he shows that Greek criticism influenced such a conception and that this influence started to become balanced with aesthetics in Ḥāzīm al-Qarṭājannī’s book, which reads Avicenna very well but does not rigidly stick to the logical/Aristotelian approach to poetry (177-78).

Ḥammūdah, ‘Abd al-Wāḥid’ and ‘Aṣḥūr’s analyses and comparisons introduced me to comparative criticism. However, I would like to assert that this dissertation is not

following any of their approaches, nor does it combine them. In other words, I do not argue, here, for deriving a modern Arabic critical theory from the Arabic heritage alone, nor do I intend to suggest that an influence exists there between the Arabic side and the Western side nor do I deny this. My understanding of comparative criticism, as presented in this dissertation, is that it aims at establishing a dialogue between different theories in the long critical traditions around the world. Just as tracing the origins of a theory in its intellectual heritage is important to understand it, comparing a theory to what is different/similar to it in another theoretical environment may benefit us to widen our conception of each theory from both sides. This is what I would like to pursue in this dissertation. My aim is to find how the notion of “meaning” formulates/or is formulated by these critical discourses, how meaning is constituted on the level of a word, a sentence and a text, and how meaning becomes aesthetically more or less significant in their views. In short, how does each critic approach textual meaning?

Throughout my analysis, I use statistical analytical techniques as assistant tools to enhance how we understand the usage of the key terms of the theories I discuss. I do not intend to discuss the theory of statistical textual analysis here since it would require an extended discussion. However, interested readers may want to look at the references section for suggested readings.

The first chapter of this dissertation is devoted to the theories of al-Jurjānī and al-Qarṭājannī. I begin by discussing the medieval Arabic debate of “word and meaning” and how al-Jurjānī accommodates this debate in his idea of *al-naẓm* “arrangement.” Then I would like to search how he understands “arrangement” as the motor of textual meaning.

After this, I elaborate al-Qarṭājannī's notion of *al-tanāsub*, "appropriateness," and present it as a prominent theory of the structural meaningfulness of texts.

The second chapter focuses on deconstruction and compares it to *al-naẓm*. The explicit contrariness between the two terms provokes my enthusiasm to reveal how these two understandings of language differ from or correspond to each other. My discussion of deconstruction is structured in the same way Derrida structures his theory in *Of Grammatology* and *Signature Event Context*, i.e., I discuss Derrida's discussion of some figures whom he criticizes in these texts such as Saussure and Austin. In this way, I can follow Derrida's arguments as it develops via discussing these writers' notions of language and meaning.

Another way of looking at this chapter is that it centers on discussing some key concepts such as signifier, signified, writing, arche-writing, trace and *différance*. These concepts form the motor of linguistic signification for Derrida, at least as I understand it. Therefore, I intend to compare the implications of these concepts to the concept of *al-naẓm* as developed by al-Jurjānī, which means that I compare between two different conceptions of the motor of linguistic signification.

In the third chapter, I take up Jakobson's parallelism not as a motor of linguistic signification but as the motor of poetry's artifice. Unlike Derrida, Jakobson's discussion of parallelism is distributed over different essays, most of which, however, have been assembled together in his book *Language in Literature*. Therefore, I shall mainly frame my reading of his theory in the essays of this book, especially *Poetry of Grammar and Grammar of Poetry*. I also attempt to explore Jakobson's conception of parallelism and meaning by looking at its reception in Douglas's theory of "ring composition." After this,

I compare parallelism to al-Qarṭājannī's *al-tanāsub* (appropriateness) as his motor of poetry's artifice. So, I compare between two different motors of poetry's artifice.

The reason that Derrida's theory is discussed before Jakobson's, which does not reflect their actual chronological order, is that the former represents a discussion of "meaning" on the word-level and the sentence-level but the later represents a discussion of "meaning" on the level of a whole composition. So, I go gradually from single words, to sentences to a whole text's structure.

CHAPTER 1: Two Classical Arabic Theories of Textual Meaning

Birds eye view of classical Arabic literary criticism concerning the issue of word and meaning.

The Arabic tribes used to congratulate each other when a new poet emerges in a tribe. For them, this was an occasion of glory, wealth and a means of safety and preservation. This is because a poet chants the power and manners of his tribe, circulating their dignity throughout the Arabic peninsula. A poet also defends his tribe against the satirists of other tribes in what is known as منافرات ومفاخرات *Munāfarāt wa Mufākharāt* (Competitions and Rivalries) (al-Qayrawānī, 1:37; Nickelson, 71). This shows that poetry was very important for the Arabs, just as media is in contemporary life.

With the development of literary analysis in early medieval Islamic times, critics began to inquire about the source of the beauty of poetry, what is it? This question led to one of the major debates in medieval Arabic rhetoric and literary criticism, i.e., قضية اللفظ *Qaḍiyat al-lafẓ wa al-ma‘nā* (the issue of word and meaning).

As traditionally conceived, there were three answers to this question and each answer represents one stream in this debate. The first stream's answer is that the source of poetic beauty is اللفظ *al-lafẓ* (word). The word *al-lafẓ* literally means the uttered or utterance; however, as a term, it includes the single word, a series of words, i.e., an expression and what is not related to the intellectual content of speech. Therefore, by and large, *al-lafẓ* can translate itself as “form,” being the opposite of “content.”

The main figure of this stream is al-Jāhiz (d. 255 AH, 868 AD), a cornerstone of Arabic literature and criticism. He opposes the didactic evaluation of poetry, which confines its significance to meaning. In this context, he famously argues,

المعاني مطروحة في الطريق ، يعرفها العجمي والعربي ، والبدوي والقروي. وإنما الشأن في إقامة الوزن ،
وتخير اللفظ ، وسهولة المخرج ، وفي صحة الطبع وجودة السبك ، فإنما الشعر صناعة ، وضرب من
النسج ، وجنس من التصوير. (al-Ḥayawān, 3:131-32)

Meanings are thrown in the road; the non-Arab as well as the Arab, the Bedouin and the rustic villager know them. However, the essential aspect [of poetry] consists in establishing a rhythm, selecting a word, the ease of uttering, the fineness of poetic competence and the goodness of casting/patterning. Indeed, poetry is but a craft, a type of textile and a species of portraying.²

This passage suggested for some critics that al-Jāhiz regards poetry as a pure formalistic project and that he underestimates the conceptual content of poetry (‘Āmir, 32; Ḍayf, 52). Meanings are shown to be an easy target for any speaker; they do not require artistry nor talent to be thought about. By contrast, the formal components of poetry such as words and rhythm are not thrown in the road; not everybody can come up with beautiful utterances because they require poetic talent.

However, other critics interpret the problematic sentence “meanings are thrown in the road” as that general themes are easily thinkable, not that individual meanings and ideas are all easily reachable (‘Abbās, 242; Jam‘ī, 51-53; ‘īd, 48). This can further be proved by

² This and all other translations from Arabic are mine unless otherwise indicated.

the fact that al-Jāhiz emphasizes that poets should choose their ideas to be noble and bring noble words to suit the noble meanings. He says, “he who wants to have a noble meaning shall assign a noble word for it because it is the right of the noble meaning to have a noble word” (al-Jāhiz, *al-Bayān* 1:136). Despite the convincing argument of this interpretation, it remains true to say that al-Jāhiz’s overall conception of poetry tends to relegate its conceptual aspect to a secondary position after its textual and formal aspects because he clearly shows that poetry is but a craft of choosing different formal elements being opposed to meaning.

The second stream of the debate answers the question “What is the source of poetic beauty?” that it can either be meanings or words or both. The pioneer of this stream is Ibn Qutaybah (d. 276 AH – 889 AD), who opens his anthology *كتاب الشعر والشعراء Kitāb al-Shi‘r wa al-Shu‘arā’* (Book of Poetry and Poets) with a critical introduction in which he shows four categories of the components of poetry: 1- good meanings and beautiful words; 2- beautiful words and unbeneficial meanings; 3- good meanings and bad words; 4- bad meanings and bad words (64-69). The fact that most of the examples of good meanings that he cites have moral or wise meanings suggested for some critics that morality/wisdom is a condition for good poetry in Ibn Qutaybah’s discourse; thus, erotic poetry, for example, cannot be regarded as good poetry even if it consists of good words (Jam‘ī, 61-62).

Nonetheless, Ibn Qutaybah does not claim that all good poetry must be moralistic. In fact, he is famous for saying that modern poets should follow the traditional thematic structure of pre-Islamic poetry, which usually begins with weeping on the mistress’s ruined abode and an emotional or physical description of her. This means that Ibn Qutaybah does not expect all meanings of poetry to be moralistic because there would be some passionate

meanings at least in the beginning of the poem. Furthermore, Ibn Qutaybah discusses different poets that are famous for their erotic poetry such as Imru' al-Qays and Muslim Ibn al-Walīd, but he does not discount their poetry because of its eroticism.

The main difference between Ibn Qutaybah and al-Jāhiz is that the former evenly distributed the beauty of poetry between *al-lafz* (word) and *al-ma'nā* (meaning); both elements are subject to goodness or weakness; the latter, however, seems to have had some prejudice to *al-lafz* in his evaluation of poetry, as he says, “the essential aspect [of poetry] consists in establishing a rhythm, choosing a word, the ease of uttering.” Overall, both critics postulate that “word” and “meaning” are two different elements of literature; therefore, litterateurs should beautify each element in order to produce a good literary text.

The third stream of the debate denies this separation between “word” and “meaning” on a textual level and instead affirms that the beauty of poetry lies in the idea of *النظم al-naẓm* (arrangement). This is what al-Jurjānī attempts to do in his two books *أسرار البلاغة Asrār al-Balāghah* (The Secrets of Eloquence) and *دلائل الإعجاز Dalā'il al-I'jāz* (The Proofs of Incapacitation), which we shall discuss in details below.

'Abd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī

The ultimate goal of al-Jurjānī's rhetorical theory is to discover how al-Qur'ān is معجز *mu'jiz* miraculous, that is, how it is inimitable. To understand this question, we should first shed some light on the issue of the Qur'ānic incapacitation (إعجاز القرآن *I'jāz al-Qur'ān*).

As mentioned before, the Arabs were very celebrative of their poetry to such an extent that some historical accounts inform us that, before Islam, certain poems were

nominated to be written with golden ink, thus called المذهبات *al-Mudhahhabāt* (the gilded ones) (al-Rāfi‘ī, *Tārīkh* 3:139).

With the coming of Islam, the Qur’ān was the main miracle that the prophet, who was illiterate, presented as a proof of the truthfulness of his message. Despite the wide and aggressive rejection of Islam during its early years and that most of the Arabs claimed that the Qur’ān is fabricated or that it is poetry, the Arabs could not hide their admiration of the Qur’ān’s beauty to such an extent that some of them used to put in earplugs to prevent themselves from being attracted to it (Ibn Hishām 2:34). Some verses in the Qur’ān invite those who cast doubt on it and disbelieve in Islam to compose something similar to al-Qur’ān then it declares that no text can ever match the Qur’an. For example, Allāh says:

وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ فِي رَيْبٍ مِّمَّا نَزَّلْنَا عَلَىٰ عَبْدِنَا فَأْتُوا بِسُورَةٍ مِّثْلِهِ وَادْعُوا شُهَدَاءَكُمْ مِّنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ
(٢٣) فَإِنْ لَّمْ تَفْعَلُوا وَلَنْ تَفْعَلُوا فَاتَّقُوا النَّارَ الَّتِي وَقُودُهَا النَّاسُ وَالْحِجَارَةُ أُعِدَّتْ لِلْكَافِرِينَ (٢٤).

(*al-Qur’ān*, chapter al-Baqarah [the cow], verses 23-24)

And if you are in doubt as to what we have revealed unto our slave, then bring a chapter of the like thereof and call your witnesses beside Allāh, if you were truthful (23) If you do not do so, and you will never do, then guard your selves from the fire [hell], whose fuel is people and stones, prepared for the disbelievers (24).

In another chapter, Allāh says:

أَمْ يَقُولُونَ افْتَرَاهُ قُلْ فَأْتُوا بِعَشْرِ سُوَرٍ مِّثْلِهِ مُفْتَرِيَاتٍ وَادْعُوا مَنِ اسْتَطَعْتُمْ مِّنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ
(١٣) فَإِلَمْ يَسْتَجِيبُوا لَكُمْ فَأَعْلَمُوا أَنَّمَا أُنْزِلَ بِعِلْمِ اللَّهِ وَأَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ فَهَلْ أَنْتُمْ مُّسْلِمُونَ (١٤).

(*al-Qur'ān*, chapter Hūd, verses 13-14)

Do they say he forged it? Say, bring ten forged chapters like unto it and call whomsoever you can beside Allāh, if you were truthful (13) If then they do not respond to you, know that it has been sent down [revealed] by the knowledge of Allāh and that there is no god but Him. Will you then be submitters (Muslims)? (14).

These and other verses invite and challenge those who disbelieve in the Qur'ān to vie with it by composing ten chapters or even one chapter similar to any chapter in the Qur'ān. Had they composed such a chapter, says al-Jurjānī, they would have defeated the challenge and proved that the whole religion of Islam is fake. Nonetheless, no such composition was produced and, instead, the Arabs chose the armed encounter with Islam (*Dalā'il* 38). From an Islamic perspective, the Arabs could not imitate the Qur'ān because the Qur'ān is absolutely and ultimately inimitable.³

al-Jurjānī enquires about the reason that the Arabs, who were a poetic nation *par excellence*, could not imitate the Qur'ān. In other words, how is the Qur'ān inimitable and incapacitative? He claims that in order to answer this question, we should first ask: how are some texts better than others? “Goodness” here is meant to be general; in other words, al-Jurjānī does not specify one kind of goodness, e.g., moral goodness or formal goodness; rather, he asks about the general excellence of speech: how does it vary? However, before we attempt to answer this question, claims al-Jurjānī, we still need to ask an epistemological question: How does language work? This very basic question attempts to

³ For more discussions about the Qur'anic incapacitation, see Shākir, *Madākhil*; al-Rāfi'ī, *I'jāz*; 'Abd al-Rāḥmān', *al-I'jāz*.

find how language functions and how it conveys meaning. If we know the answer, says al-Jurjānī, we would know why some uses of language are better than others; i.e., why some speeches are better than others, which in turn will let us understand how the Qur’ān is better than any other speech and so it is inimitable.

We can order the theoretical questions and the goal of al-Jurjānī’s discourse as follows:

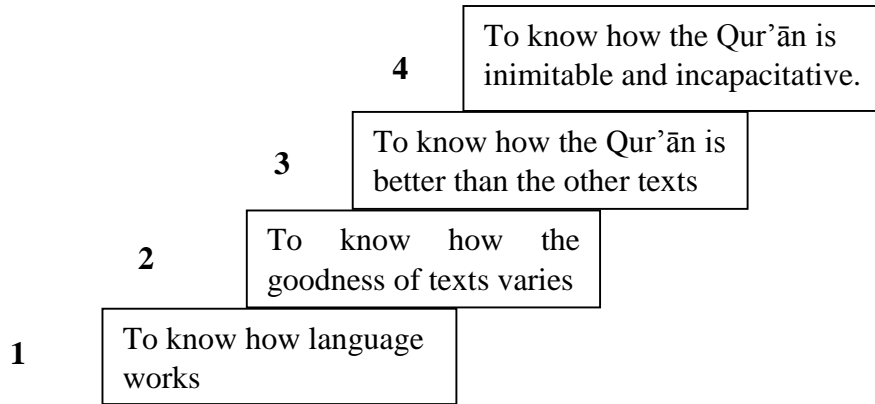


Figure 1.1: Steps of al-Jurjānī's theory

In his answer to the first question, al-Jurjānī articulates that language works by arranging different letters (i.e., sounds), to form a word, then arranging different words to form a sentence. He defines a word as a signifier: “words are signifiers of meanings” (*Dalā’il* 483). For instance, when we arrange the sound (ل) between (ب) and (ب), the result is the word “باب” [door], which signifies the meaning of door. The signified is thus, a “meaning” of something. al-Jurjānī names that to which a signified refers as “الشيء” [thing] (*Dalā’il* 483).

The relationship between a word and its meaning is conventional. There is no necessary reason that the signifier “ضرب,” *darb* and not “ربض,” *rabḍ* means hitting, but

the only reason is conventionality (*Dalā'il* 49). To give a similar English example, there is no necessary reason the signifier “tree” means a tall, branched piece of wood that grows and has leaves. Nor is there any linkage between “tree” and “three.” There is no inherent similarity between their respective meanings. Hence, the only reason that the word “tree” was assigned to its meaning is conventionality, and not motivation.

Furthermore, al-Jurjānī argues that conventionality applies to both the spoken and the written forms of a word,

أشكال الخط . . . جعلت أمارات لأجراس الحروف المسموعة ، في أنه لا يتصور أن يكون العقل اقتضى اختصاص كل شكل منها بما اختص به ، دون أن يكون ذلك لاصطلاح وقع وتواضع اتفاق. ولو كان كذلك ، لم تختلف المواضع في الألفاظ والخطوط ، ولكانت اللغات واحدة. (*Asrār* 409)

Forms of writing . . . were made as signs of the heard sounds of letters. It is farfetched that logic necessitated the specification of each form [of writing] to what it has been assigned to, and that this [specification] did not happen out of conventionality and agreement. Had this been the case, there would not have been different conventions regarding words and fonts, and all languages would have been the same.

So, a written word signifies a spoken word, which in turn signifies a meaning. We can then justifiably infer that a written word does not signify a meaning directly, in al-Jurjānī's conception. Moreover, just as there is no logical reason that the spoken word “شجرة” [*tree*] means شجرة tree, there is no logical reason that the written word “شجرة” [*tree*] signifies the spoken word “شجرة” [*tree*].

Having seen the relationship between a spoken word and a written word, let us see the relationship between the meaning/signified of a thing and the thing itself. Some have argued that al-Jurjānī does not differentiate between a “signified” and a “thing,” unlike Saussure, who differentiates between a signified and its referent in *Course in General Linguistics* (al-Nu‘mān 229-230). However, some others claim that “in ‘Abd al-Qāhir’s [al-Jurjānī] discourse, meanings are the mental images of the things in the real world” (Murād 198), which implies that a meaning is a mental copy of an actual thing that exists in the real world; or to use Saussurean terms, a meaning is a mental copy of a referent.

In effect, al-Jurjānī does not explicitly tell us about the relationship between the “meaning” and the “thing,” but he does so implicitly. This can be found in his discussion of the function of a word/signifier whence he argues that the function of a word is not the apprising of the thing to which it refers; but rather, to be put next to another word in order to produce a sentential meaning. He says,

الألفاظ المفردة . . . لم توضع لتعرف معانيها في أنفسها ، ولكن لأن يضم بعضها إلى بعض ، فيعرف ما بينها من فوائد . . . إن زعمنا أن الألفاظ . . . إنما وضعت ليعرف بها معانيها في أنفسها ، لأدى ذلك إلى ما لا يشك عاقل في استحالته ، وهو أن يكونوا قد وضعوا للأجناس الأسماء التي وضعوها لتعرفها بها ، حتى كأنهم لو لم يكونوا قالوا: "رجل" و "فرس" و "دار" ، لما كان يكون لنا علم بهذه الأجناس . . . وحتى لو لم يكونوا وضعوا الحروف ، لكننا نجعل معانيها ، فلا نعقل نفيا ولا نهيا ولا استفهاما ولا استثناء. كيف؟
والمواضعة لا تكون ولا تتصور إلا على معلوم ، فمحال أن يوضع اسم أو غير اسم لغير معلوم ، لأن المواضعة كالإشارة ، فكما أنك إذا قلت: خذ ذاك ، لم تكن هذه الإشارة لتعرف السامع المشار إليه في نفسه ، ولكن ليعلم أنه المقصود من بين سائر الأشياء. (Dalā'il 539-540)

Single words . . . have not been conventionally made to inform us of their meanings *per se*; but to be arranged next to each other so meaningfulness

can be conceived from their interrelatedness . . . If we claim that words . . . have not been constituted but to inform us of their meanings *per se*, this claim would lead to what every sane person will undoubtedly think is impossible, i.e., that they [people in general] have assigned words to species so you would know them [the species]. This means that if they had not said: “man,” “horse,” and “home,” we would not have had any knowledge of these species . . . And if they had not assigned particles, we should have been ignorant about its meanings so we could know neither negation nor prohibition nor interrogation nor exception. How [can this be true]? while conventionality can neither happen nor be imagined to happen except for a known thing. It is impossible to assign a noun or anything other than a noun to an unknown thing because conventionality is similar to pointing to something. Therefore, when you say: ‘take that’, this gesture [the demonstrative pronoun] never informs the hearer about the thing pointed to in itself; but only allows him to know that this – from among the other things - is what is meant.

In this passage, al-Jurjānī formulates his approach to the function of single words. They have two functions; 1- to distinguish between things in the same way as a gesture towards something distinguishes it from the things around it; 2- to be linked to other words, producing useful meanings (*meaningfulness*). The comparison between a word and a gesture suggests that al-Jurjānī regards both as two species of the same genus, i.e., the sign. When I say: “take the book” I use the word ‘book’ to mark something in the room to be the object of taking. Similarly, when someone asks me: what shall I take? And I answer

him by pointing towards a book, my gesture functions to mark something as the object of taking. al-Jurjānī cites this example to theorize that when people conventionally assigned the word “book” for the concrete object of a book, they only did so in order to mark and distinguish this object from all other objects by giving it a name that no other object has. This implies that the concrete object of a book was already known for people before they gave it a name. As a modern example, the television was called television after it had been invented; therefore, the word television does not define a television but only marks and distinguishes it from telephone, lamp, etc.

We can infer from al-Jurjānī’s conception of the function of a word that the word (i.e., the signifier) is different from the meaning (i.e., the signified) and both are different from the “thing.” The signifier is different from the signified in that the former is a conventional phonetic symbol but the latter is a mental image. Both then are different from the thing because it is something that exists before we make a mental image and a phonetic symbol of it. Therefore, al-Jurjānī’s paradigm of a single word includes three components:

Thing: thing-meant, nominatum. (Exists firstly)

Meaning: a mental image of something in the world. (Exists secondly)

Word: an array of letters (sounds). (Exists thirdly)

Among the main concepts of al-Jurjānī’s theory, “difference” is particularly focal because it forms a condition for signification. In that, it justifies having a sign to mark a thing among other things. He says,

اللغة تجري مجرى العلامات والسمات ، ولا معنى للعلامة والسمة حتى يحتمل الشيء ما جعلت العلامة دليلا

عليه وخلافه ، فإنما كانت (ما) مثلا علما للنفي ، لأن ههنا نقيضا له وهو الإثبات. (Asrār 376)

Language works in the fashion of signs and marks. There is no point in having a sign or a mark except that a thing carries what a sign has been made as a signifier to and what is **different** from it; thus, “not,” for example, was made as a sign for negation only because herein [in the idea of negation] exists its opposite, which is affirmation. (my emphasis)

The phrase, “what a sign has been made as a signifier to” simply means “a signified;” accordingly, the word “sign” here is used in lieu of “a word.” We may thus simplify the whole quote as following: there is no point in having a sign (i.e., word/signifier) except that a thing carries what that sign signifies (i.e., a signified) and what is **different** from that signified. Thus, “not,” as an example, was made as a sign for negation only because negation always includes a (negative) affirmation. Affirmation and negation are the opposite of each other; therefore, they always negatively carry each other.

In this context, the verb “carry” is used metaphorically in two ways, 1- positive carrying; 2- negative carrying. The positive carrying describes embracing and matching something, e.g., negation – as a thing – embraces and matches negation as a signified or a concept. The negative carrying describes carrying not, or in other words, being different and unmatched with something, e.g., negation embraces not and matches not (the concept of) affirmation.

To give an illustrative example, the horse, the animal, matches the signified horse and matches **not** what is different from this signified such as the signifieds lion, water, hunger, light, etc. This is because the horse as a thing is itself different from lion, water, hunger and light as things. That said, the fact that the horse – as a thing – matches a signified

and matches not the other signifieds justifies having the word/sign “horse.” Because if the horse was the same as lion, then there is no reason not to keep the sign “lion” for both.

To give another example of this point, if I bring two similar pieces of stone, I do not need to call one “stone” and the other “natark” – or any other name – because both things match the same signified; so both would have the same sign “stone.”

Now let us explain al-Jurjānī’s example. Negation as a thing (an act) matches the signified “negation” and matches not the signified “affirmation” and all other signifieds such as decency, animal, moon, etc. This is because negation as a thing is the opposite of affirmation as a thing, and is different from the other things such as decency, animal, moon, etc. That said, negation as a thing must have a sign (i.e., a signifier), which is the word “negation.”

Thus, al-Jurjānī’s quote above shows that “difference” is a condition for having a sign. If there is no difference, there is no need for a sign. To summarize, *a thing can have a private sign only when it is different from the other things that already have signs.* To say this in another way: *a thing can have a private sign only if it carries a signified and carries not the other different signifieds.*

Although al-Jurjānī does not mention the relationship between each signifier and the other signifiers, it is logical to infer that it is a differential relationship because the differential relationship between the things and between the signifieds implicates that every signifier is also different from all other signifiers. Hence, “difference” describes the relationship between each thing and all other things, between each signified and all other signifieds, and between each signifier and all other signifiers.

al-‘AFLAJ

Coming from the Egyptian kitchen, this is a modern real-life example that I want to use in order to further elaborate al-Jurjānī’s understanding of “word” and “meaning.” Sometimes we make chicken nuggets by coating boneless pieces of chicken with mixed eggs, then garnishing them with small pieces of onion, spices and flour, then frying them. The left over usually goes to the trash. However, one day, I was doing this with my father and he decided not to trash the left over. Instead, he mixed the onion with the eggs, the spices and the flour, and finally formed the output in the same shape of the chicken nuggets. When we fried this mixture, it looked totally undistinguishable from the chicken nuggets. As the other people knew nothing of what we were doing, they thought that everything was chicken nuggets. Those who picked up this “thing” that we made were surprised because they did not find chicken under the golden coat; but rather, they unexpectedly found onion and spices only. This funny surprise provoked us to try to name this new food, my father decided to name it: ‘Aflaj.

The word ‘Aflaj does not exist in any Arabic dictionary. Even if it exists somewhere, we had never heard this word before that day. My father just invented this word because the bizarreness and complexity of its sounds suited the complexity and unexpectedness of the food we made. So, let us analyze this in the light of al-Jurjānī’s understanding of the single word. There are three things that happened that day: 1- we made something; 2- we realized that this thing is new and different from all other things we know; 3- we made a word that is different from all other words we know.

The outcome of the first step is what al-Jurjānī calls “thing,” the outcome of the second step is what he calls “meaning or signified” and the outcome of the third step is

what he calls “sign or signifier.” We made the sign “ ‘Aflaj” because the thing we had made carried a meaning, which we conceptualized in our minds when we saw that “thing” for the first time on that day, and it carried not/matched not all other meanings we had such as the meanings of butter, chicken nuggets, water, morning, sky, etc. Thus, when we realized there is a difference between the thing we made and all other things, and so there is a difference between the meaning of that thing and all other meanings, we decided to put a sign, or a word to mark and distinguish this meaning and its thing from all other meanings and things. It goes without saying that the word/sign we made was also different from all other words/signs we know.

This example shows that al-Jurjānī’s conception of word and meaning is realistic because it describes a process that continues to happen until today.⁴ Nonetheless, he notes that the outcome of this process, i.e., a single word, is not subject to eloquence or *maziyyah*, privilege, because a single word – not linked to other words – does not make meaning (*Dalā’il* 401-02).⁵ Here is the second sense of the word “meaning,” which is not about a signified of a word, but rather about the meaning of an array of arranged words. It is the meaning of a whole sentence. This introduces us to the second part of al-Jurjānī’s answer to: How does language work?

نظم الكلم *Nazm al-Kalim* (Words-arrangement)

al-Jurjānī argues that rhetoric and literary criticism have their core subject in studying words-arrangement because this is what formulates the goodness of any speech

⁴ However, it deconstructs the alleged arbitrary nature of a word.

⁵ Nevertheless, he states that the flavor of a word (i.e., being nice in pronunciation) gives it a credit as a word (*Dalā’il* 522).

(*Dalā'il* 46). Therefore, words-arrangement represents the most important element in literature for al-Jurjānī, who usually refers to it as *al-naẓm* “arrangement.” So, when he generally says *al-naẓm*, “arrangement,” he means words-arrangement and not letters-arrangement.

al-Jurjānī says words-arrangement is essentially an arrangement of meanings that emerge when words relate to one another (*Dalā'il* 54). For instance, when saying, “my brother bought a new horse,” I make a relationship between “my” and “brother” in that I attribute him to myself. This relationship only existed in speech after “my” had preceded “brother.” I also make another relationship between “my brother” and “bought,” which is the agency of the verb. Additionally, I make a relationship between the subject, the verb and the object “a new horse,” let alone the relationships between “a,” “new” and “horse.” Hence, to me as an addresser, the arrangement of these words is in fact an arrangement of meanings (or, relationships) that existed in my mind before I utter the sentence. To my addressee, the arrangement of these words is an arrangement of meanings (or, relationships) that would exist in his mind upon receiving this sentence.

Furthermore, al-Jurjānī acknowledges that words-arrangement is a motivated process because words can be arranged in different ways that carry almost the same meaning; however, the speaker chooses the arrangement that, he thinks, best expresses his thoughts (*Dalā'il* 81-83). For instance, (Ali went to school at 10 am) is slightly different from (At 10 am, Ali went to school) and both are slightly different from (To school, Ali went at 10 am) and all of these sentences are slightly different from (Went Ali to school at 10 am). The idea beyond this differentiation is that what is more important comes first in the sentence. So in the first sentence, the focus is on the subject; in the second sentence,

the focus is on the time of the action; in the third sentence, the focus is on the destination and in the last sentence, the focus is on the action itself. From these different arrangements, the eloquent speaker can choose what he thinks is most apt to what he wants his speech to accomplish. This choice can be influenced by different factors such as the intent of the addresser, the situation of the speech and the condition of the addressee. Hence, these factors motivate a speaker to arrange his words in different ways.

Commenting on this aspect, Deeb notes, “al-Jurjānī conceived of the order of the relationships [between words] in literary composition to be of a psychological nature, determined by the emotional and intellectual state of being of the speaker” (36). This points out the idea that word order, typically conceived as a mere adherence to grammar, has a psychological basis that coincides with the grammatical basis, in that word order reflects the cogitation of the speaker and his attitude to the information he delivers via his utterances.

In fact, al-Jurjānī shows that arranging meanings in the mind and arranging words in speech are identical; the way meanings are arranged in the mind is the way words are arranged in the speech. He says,

إذا فرغت من ترتيب المعاني في نفسك ، لم تحتج إلى أن تستأنف فكرا في ترتيب الألفاظ ، بل تجدها تترتب
لك بحكم أنها خدم للمعاني ، وتابعة لها ، ولاحقة بها ، وأن العلم بمواقع المعاني في النفس ، علم بمواقع
الألفاظ الدالة عليها في النطق. (Dalā'il 54)

When you finish arranging meanings in your ego, you do not need to start thinking about arranging words; indeed, you find them being arranged for you due to the fact that they are servants of meanings, followers of them

and attached to them. To know the positions of meanings in the ego is to know the positions of the words that signify them in speech.

When we mentally arrange meanings and then grammatically express them in words, we utter the words in an arrangement that copies the arrangements of the meanings because words serve (i.e., copy and manifest) meanings. This total symmetry between words-arrangement and meanings-arrangement results from the idea that words follow their meanings so when a meaning comes firstly and another comes secondly in the mind, the word referring to the first meaning must also come firstly in speech and that of the second meaning must come secondly. Hence, assigning positions for meanings in the mind and assigning positions for words in speech are identical.

This positioning depends on the relationships by which meanings/words relate to each other as shown above in the example (my brother bought a new horse). These relationships, al-Jurjānī strictly argues, are but the grammatical meanings. In fact, he repeats, “*al-naẓm* arrangement is the observance of the meanings of grammar in the meanings of speech” (*Dalā’il* 361). What does he mean by “meanings of grammar”?

Meanings of grammar, or grammatical meanings, are the different ways in which words can relate to one another such as agency, valency, tense, transitivity, exception, interrogation, etc., (al-Jurjānī, *Dalā’il* 8). Upon these relationships, grammatical cases and inflection rules are established. For example, (Zayd ate ‘Aflaj). The way “Zayd” relates to the verb “ate” is agency [الفاعلية], the way “‘Aflaj” relates to “ate” is objectness [المفعولية], and the way “ate” relates to both “Zayd” and “‘Aflaj” is predication [الإسناد]. Thus, “Zayd” is called subject-doer, “ate” is called predicate and “‘Aflaj” is called object. According to

the Arabic inflection system, “Zayd” takes the inflectional sign *ḍammah*, “ate” takes *fathah* and “‘Aflaj” takes *fathah* as well.

The grammatical relationships of agency, predication, valency, tense, etc, are for words as cement is for bricks. However, while cement is made of powder and clay, grammatical relationships are made of meanings such as being a doer, being done, being excepted, etc. Hence, al-Jurjānī calls these grammatical relationships and their various forms “meanings of grammar.” He then defines his main concept of *al-naẓm* “arrangement” as “the observance of the meanings of grammar in the meanings of speech.” This means that before I say anything, I think about Zayd, ‘Aflaj and ate, then I think and observe that Zayd does an action by eating, and that ‘Aflaj is being affected by that action. These intellectual observances exemplify the grammatical meanings of agency, transitivity and objectness. When I express my thoughts in words, my words would be structured/cemented according to the same grammatical meanings by which I thought about *Zayd*, *‘Aflaj* and *ate*. Thus, to sum up, the meanings of grammar reflect and mirror the way we think about meanings and they structure the words accordingly.

Hence, we can see that al-Jurjānī’s understanding of “meanings of grammar” affirms the intellectual and psychological nature of *al-naẓm* (Deeb 39-40). They also represent the ways in which we try to understand the world via establishing relationships between the things in it. In a sense, “meanings of grammar” are the code of information that we make and receive, similar to the code of computer programs or web pages.

Now the answer of the first question is complete. al-Jurjānī has shown us that language works via difference on the single-word level and via arrangement on the arranged-words level. On the single-word level, the speaker does not have the ability to change how a word is constituted or to change its meaning/signified because all of these are conventionally made. Thus, a single word is not subject to eloquence. On the contrary, in the arranged-words level, the speaker has different options to arrange his words in the way he wants. Therefore, this arrangement is the subject of eloquence and literary beauty.

In other words, the arrangement of words is what makes a speech eloquent or not eloquent, and it is what makes a speech better than another speech, or a text better than another text in terms of eloquence. Herein the second question comes: How does the goodness of texts vary?

In his answer to this question, al-Jurjānī differentiates between أصل المعنى *aṣl al-ma'nā* (the origin of meaning) and صورة المعنى *ṣūrat al-ma'nā* (the image of meaning) (*Dalā'il* 266, 366). The origin of meaning refers to a raw meaning that is basic, rudimentary and prosaic such as “the sky is spacious” or “he is kind.” However, the image of meaning is the amelioration of an origin of meaning to load more meaningful dimensions in the speech (*Dalā'il* 422-23). This idea of “imaging of meaning” represents the core of poetic eloquence, excellence and privilege for al-Jurjānī. (Abū Mūsā, *al-Madkhal* 324, 345).

al-Jurjānī shows that a raw meaning can be transformed into different images, i.e., expressions, and that this transformation is what determines the superiority of one expression – in itself – over another. He spends most of his two books exploring how different arrangements of words reproduce a raw meaning in different images (not

imageries) and how one image of meaning can express a raw meaning better and more eloquently than other images could.

Before we look at some of al-Jurjānī's examples, we should note that the concept of "image of meaning" represents the creative type of "arrangement" because the reformation of a raw meaning into an image of meaning requires artistry, creativity and subtlety (al-Nu'mān 112).

To give an illustrative example of an origin of meaning and different images of it, let us say, "Muḥammad is brave." No other arrangement can be simpler than this one to inform us about Muḥammad's bravery. In other words, this is the raw arrangement of such an idea. The meaning is direct and patent; the syntax is most basic. However, if we alter the arrangement of this sentence to become: "brave, Muḥammad is," we would intensify the meaning, making the sentence more eloquent. Another possibility is to say: "Muḥammad is a lion." In this example, the arrangement is basic, the same as in the first sentence; but this one has a metaphorical meaning. This figurative element in the sentence intensifies the idea of Muḥammad's bravery; therefore, it increases the eloquence of the sentence. Another way is to say: "A lion, Muḥammad is." This sentence has an altered arrangement, the same as in the second example, and also a metaphorical meaning. Therefore, al-Jurjānī would claim that this fourth sentence, in itself, is more eloquent than the other sentences because its arrangement is more meaningful and more condensed than the others because it is equal to saying: Muḥammad is prominently brave and his bravery is like the bravery of a lion.

This rudimentary quadruple example shows that al-Jurjānī conceives the imaging of a raw meaning, either via the use of “figurative meanings” or “rich syntactic texture” or both, as the yardstick of textual goodness and sublimity (*Dalā’il* 99).

The first source of textual goodness is thus the use of figurative language. al-Jurjānī shows that this is the case of metaphor, metonymy and the other tropes. In these cases, a statement has two meanings, one on the surface and another beneath the first. The first direct and patent meaning is not intended in itself; but it is intended to be a mediator or a bridge to another latent and indirect meaning. Therefore, al-Jurjānī terms the second meaning as معنى المعنى *ma’nā al-ma’nā* (meaning of meaning).

Among al-Jurjānī’s examples of “the meaning of meaning” is the Arabic panegyric proverb “someone is of [always has] plenty of ashes,” which is a metonymy that describes the hospitality of a person, who always cooks for the guests; therefore, he uses much coal; therefore, he always has plenty of ashes. al-Jurjānī explains that the eloquence of this metonymy lies in that it celebrates “the abundance of hospitality by affirming its attestation, evidence and the sign of its existence. This is certainly more eloquent than affirming it [the abundance of hospitality] by itself [without evidence]” (*Dalā’il* 447-48). Here we can capture how al-Jurjānī determines the eloquence of a statement over another statement. His main criteria is the intensity and expressiveness of the meaning. The intensity of a meaning is to use few meanings to express many. “He is of plenty of ashes” encompasses three meanings as explained above, and it celebrates the generosity and hospitality of the person by expressing it in a beautiful, attested, and thought-provoking way, so it is expressive.

The second source of textual goodness is the richness of syntactic texture. It lies in the selection and distribution of words in a sentence. al-Jurjānī devotes a significant part of *Dalā'il* to discuss the meaningful aspects of various syntactic structures that the Arabic language has, e.g., النفي (negation of the verb or the noun), التقديم والتأخير (prepositioning and postpositioning), القصر (confinement), الفصل و الوصل (conjunction and disjunction), الحذف (omission), and التعريف والتنكير (definiteness and indefiniteness). The way al-Jurjānī measures this type of eloquence is to see the different possibilities one can use to express his meaning then to determine the one that is most intensive and expressive.

It is quite hard to convey the details of syntactic texture from Arabic to English because of the different word order each language allows; therefore, I shall provide a gloss for gloss translation for the following examples in order to show al-Jurjānī's point.

قوم إذا حاربوا ضرروا عدوهم أو حاولوا النفع في أشياءهم نفعوا

People|if|they fought|they harmed|their enemy

or|they tried|benefit|in|their allies|they benefited

Such people, if they fight, they would harm their enemy, or if they try to benefit their allies, they would benefit them.

سجية تلك منهم غير محدثة إن الخلائق فاعلم شرها البدع (Ibn Thābit 152; *Dalā'il* 94)

Nature|that|from them|not|fabricated

Verily|the characteristics|so know|worst of it|the fabrications

This is their nature; it is not fabricated. Indeed, the worst characteristics, be aware, are the fabricated ones.

In the first line, the poet refers to the people whom he praises using an indefinite predicate, i.e., “people,” whose subject is eliminated. The original syntax is: they are people, who if they fight . . . The elimination of the subject and the indefiniteness of the predicate are meant to exaggerate these people and generate an ambiguity that induces the audience to wonder “what people? what about them?,” so the rest of the line would serve as an answer to this question. There are also two omitted objects, that of “fight” and that of “benefit.” The reason for this omission is that these objects can easily be understood from the context of the line because it is clear that the object of “fight” is “their enemy” and the object of “benefit” is “their allies.” Therefore, the poet omitted these words to avoid redundancy.

The second line concludes and summarizes the superiority of the praised people. It highlights and affirms the originality of the traits mentioned in the first line by prepositioning the predicate “nature” and postponing the subject “that from them.” This prepositioning and postpositioning exemplify the general idea that “what is more important is brought to the front of the sentence” (*Dalā’il* 107-108). Furthermore, this line elegantly brings the addressee into the scene by placing an independent clause, i.e., “so know” between the subject and predicate of the last hemistich, making the speech more interactive. Hence, the rich syntactic formulation of these lines forms the main source of their eloquence, given that they do not involve any figurative meanings.

The third and last source of textual goodness consists of both the figurative use of language and the richness of syntactic texture. Many of the examples that al-Jurjānī mentions under this type are from the Qur’ān. For instance, verse four in Chapter Mary, “واشتعل الرأس شيباً” [flared|the head|hoariness], (the head has flared with hoariness). This verse depicts the white hair that spread on the Prophet Zechariah’s head in old age. Part

of the beauty of this verse, says al-Jurjānī, stems from depicting the rapid spread of white hair on the head as a destructive fire that is quickly burning something and ending it. So, the details of this metaphor are as follows:

Table 1.1: Explanation of the metaphor

<u>Word</u>	<u>Compared to</u>
Head	Wood or Wool
Spread	Flare
Hoariness	Fire

In addition to this unique metaphor, al-Jurjānī affirms that the setting of the syntax forms the major source of the beauty of this verse. To show this, he looks at the other syntactic possibilities one could use in imitating this verse. For example, “the hoariness flared on the head,” or “the hoariness of the head has flared,” or “the head’s hoariness has flared,” etc. In these wordings, the meaning is not as intensive and expressive as it is in the verse. The start of the verse is especially exciting and attractive because the word “flared” comes first, which causes the listener to expect to hear something related to fire. So, when the unexpected word “head” comes directly after “flared” as its agent, horror emerges in the psyche of the audience and the excitement peaks. However, “hoariness” finally comes to reveal the whole issue, it is not a real fire, but it is just white hair and old age. Furthermore, having the “head,” not the hoariness, as the agent of “flared” implies that all of the hair became white with no exception (*Dalā’il* 100-01). Thus, both the metaphor and the syntax jointly generate the beauty and eloquence of the verse.

This is how al-Jurjānī answers the third question: How the Qur’ān is better than the other texts. He rhetorically analyzes a verse from the Qur’ān and contrasts it to poetic

and/or prose examples that have similar meanings in order to show that the arrangement and the imaging of meaning in the Qur’ānic example excel the other examples. By this, he presents a practical explanation of how the Qur’ān is inimitable and incapacitative.⁶ Herein we can see that al-Jurjānī uses (The Secrets of Eloquence) as a means to discover (The Proofs of Incapacitation).

In studying al-Jurjānī’s theory, we have seen that it presents “difference” as the motor of linguistic signification on the word-level and *al-naẓm* “arrangement” as the motor of linguistic signification on the sentence-level, and that it studies these two major levels of language in order to demonstrate how eloquence happens and how it varies. The first level is the single word. al-Jurjānī argues that a single word, whether spoken or written, has two functions only, that is, to signify and mark a meaning and to be contextualized with other words. The meaning of a single word is a mental image of a “thing” in the world and it only holds a meaningful benefit when it is arranged with other meanings. Both a “thing” and its “mental image” must be *different* from all other “things” and “mental images” in order to have a word assigned to them. He also insists that a word does not define its meaning and its “thing” but only signifies them and distinguishes them from other meanings and things.

The second level is the sentence. If a sentence is a group of arranged words, it is also a group of arranged meanings because words are arranged in correspondence with the arrangement of meanings in one’s psyche. The pivot of “arrangement” is grammatical

⁶ For more discussion on al-Jurjānī’s approach to the Qur’ānic incapacitation see al-Khaṭīb, *al-I’jāz*.

meanings, which are a set of relationships that enable one to synthesize different meanings into a sentence, carrying information to an addressee.

al-Jurjānī insists that eloquence is an attribute of the meaning(s) of a sentence, and not an attribute of the words in themselves for themselves. Eloquence stems from the intensity and the expressiveness of the meaning (Abū Mūsā, *Muqaddimah*) and can be ascribed to the use of tropes (meanings of meanings) or to the rich syntactic texture or to both. These tributaries of eloquence take an origin of meaning and image it in different expressions/images, and this imaging of a meaning is what makes eloquence vary from one expression to another when both share the same origin of meaning.

Let us now see the development of “meaning” in al-Jurjānī’s theory. “Meaning” begins as a mental image of a “thing,” signified by a word. Then this meaning becomes arranged with other meanings, and all form a compound meaning. In parallel, the word becomes arranged with other words, and all form a sentence.⁷ This arrangement happens through the grammatical meanings.

Herein, we can abstract four concepts for which al-Jurjānī uses the term “meaning”:
1- a mental image; 2- a grammatical relationship; 3- a meaning of meaning; 4- the compound meaning of a sentence. The first concept is based on “difference” and is conventionally linked to a word. It is the most essential concept of “meaning” because the other concepts of meaning are indispensably based on it. So, it is for them like a brick is for a building.

⁷ It is worth mentioning that the Arabic word for “sentence” is جملة *jumlaḥ*, which literally means: compoundness. This might indicate that it compounds single words and meanings.

The second concept of “meaning” describes the relationship between two or more words, which represents the relationship between two or more “things.” Thus, the fact that agency describes the relationship between the word “Aḥmad” and the word “ate” in saying, “Aḥmad ate” means that agency also describes the relationship between the thing “Aḥmad” and the thing “eating.” Accordingly, we systematize “Aḥmad” and “eating” as subject and predicate. By making this systematization, we make use of the grammatical meaning of “agency.”

The third concept of meaning is the “meaning of meaning,” which describes using a word to signify a meaning that is different from its conventional meaning. Hence, the intended meaning of a word becomes different from, but subtly related to, its explicit and conventional meaning.

The fourth and last concept of “meaning” is the information resulting from arranging words via grammatical meanings. This is the meaning that can be described by eloquence, goodness, excellence, etc. Therefore, texts compete with each other on the basis of how this “meaning” is formed. If it is a raw meaning, then it, in itself, is not subject to eloquence because it does not require artistry nor subtlety for making it. If it is expressed in a rich syntactic texture and/or in a figurative way, then it is subject to eloquence.

Most scholars agree that this represents the most sophisticated approach to the question of eloquence and literary beauty that classical Arabic scholarship developed. However, like most medieval Arabic critics, al-Jurjānī does not discuss the question of “meaning” beyond the sentential unit of a discourse. In the following section, I shall discuss one of the few classical Arabic attempts to theorize the concept of “meaning” in the larger structure of a text.

Hāzim al-Qarṭājannī

Discussions of medieval Arabic literary criticism usually end with Hāzim al-Qarṭājannī, who lived in the thirteenth century AD, during the ebb of the Muslim dynasty in Andalusia. He was a poet, a critic and a jurist as well. His jurisprudential background influenced his literary criticism in that he applies jurisprudential terminology and taxonomies to poetics such as the word منهج *minhāj* (method), which he uses in the title of his renowned book منهج البلغاء وسراج الأدباء *Minhāj al-Bulaghā' wa Sirāj al-Audabā'* (*The Method of The Eloquent Ones and The Lamp of The Literati*) (Abū Mūsā, *Taqrīb* 212).

Although the book is incompletely preserved, it “contains an unusually highly developed poetics” (Gelder, “Critic and Craftsman” 26). al-Qarṭājannī’s poetics is distinct from that of al-Jurjānī in two main aspects: 1- al-Qarṭājannī’s main topic is not the Qur’ānic incapacitation but poetics itself; 2- al-Qarṭājannī gives attention to the overall structure of the poem as well as its single lines. Most medieval Arabic critics focused on analyzing single lines and themes in poetry, a phenomenon that propagated the idea that medieval Arabic literary criticism has failed in understanding the complex structure of the ode (Nicholson; Gelder, *Beyond*; Stetkevych). However, al-Qarṭājannī’s book presents a peculiar critical vision of how the meanings of a poem should be structured and why. This aspect of al-Qarṭājannī’s theory seems to me as a complement to al-Jurjānī’s *al-naẓm*, which showed how meanings should be arranged in sentences, and not in whole compositions.

al-Qarṭājannī argues that the main goal of poetry is to stimulate the ego to adopt what is good and to alienate it from adopting evil (93, 305). In achieving such a goal, poetry depends on two wings, i.e., mimesis and structure. al-Qarṭājannī’s discussion of “mimesis”

investigates the relationship between poetry and reality, which, however central to the book, lies beyond the scope of this dissertation. His discussion of “structure” includes two subjects, i.e., prosody, which also falls beyond our framework, and the structure of meanings, which forms our main concern below.

al-Qarṭājannī shows that a poem consists of passages and each passage consists of lines. The term “passage,” though, has no clear definition in al-Qarṭājannī’s book. He shows that a passage *faṣl* (فصل) contains the individual meanings of *jihah* (جهة), a matter or a motif (263, 266-67).⁸ Accordingly, we can infer that the word *jihah* means a topic that consists of different molecular meanings, for instance, the topic of hospitality may consist of welcoming the guest, slaughtering the camel or the sheep, protecting the guest from danger, etc. Since each motif forms a passage, a passage is then a group of lines that include molecular meanings, which together form a motif such as longing or describing the night or a horse.

al-Qarṭājannī then compares the structure of a poem to the structure of an expression. He says, “passages that consist of lines are like words that consist of letters. Poems that consist of passages are like expressions that consist of words” (259). The following diagram is a simple visualization of these comparisons:

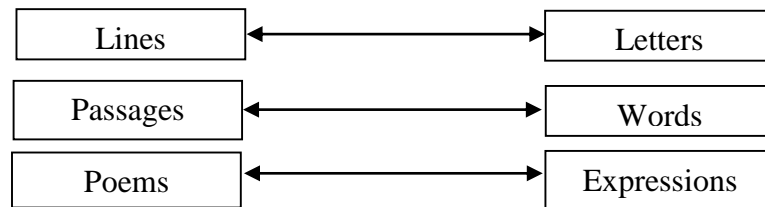


Figure 1.2: Visualization of al-Qarṭājannī’s structural comparisons

⁸ Literally, *Jihah* means “orientation/direction.” Al-Ebrahim translates *jihah* as an aspect of poetry that is figuratively depicted (335). Nevertheless, al-Qarṭājannī uses such a term for an aspect of the poetic contents in general, not only a metaphorically described aspect.

This shows us that al-Qarṭājannī's structural approach is dependent upon former discussions by critics such as al-Jurjānī about the sentential structure. Whether he was aware of al-Jurjānī's theory or not is a controversial question between modern scholars (see for example, Abū Mūsā, *Taqrīb* 162; 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib 125,153). However, the idea I want to clarify here is that al-Qarṭājannī uses the scholarship about the structure of a sentence to draw his conception of the structure of a poem. Thus, we can justifiably use our understanding of the Jurjanian *al-naẓm* as a potential guide to approach al-Qarṭājannī's conception of the meaning of a poem.

In point of fact, al-Qarṭājannī uses the same term *al-naẓm* to describe the structure/structuring of poetry. Computational techniques can help us to look at how *al-naẓm* is used in al-Qarṭājannī's book. Figure 1.3 is a word cloud of the most frequent 20 terms within 5 key-words-context of the term *al-naẓm* in the book. The size of each word in this cloud reflects its frequency; therefore, "style," "meanings," "speech," "poetry" and "words" are the ones that are most attached to *al-naẓm*. This means that al-Qarṭājannī usually thinks about *al-naẓm*, structure, in the light of style, meanings, speech, poetry and words. I tend to look at these five terms as the subject and object of *al-naẓm*. In that, style determines how meanings, speech, poetry and words should be structured, so style is the subject of *al-naẓm* whose objects are meanings, speech, poetry and words.

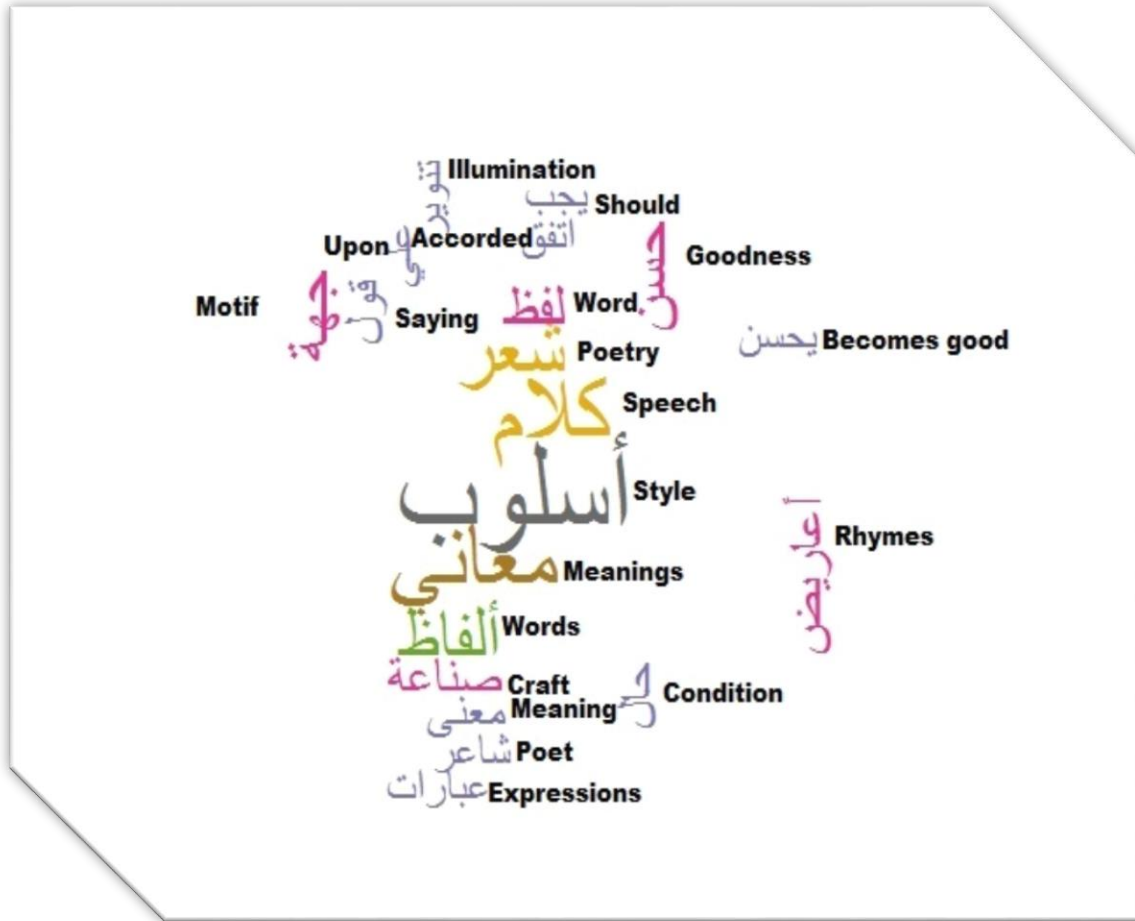


Figure 1.3: Top 20 most frequent terms within 5 key-word-context of *al-naẓm* (arrangement) in Ḥāzīm al-Qarṭājannī's *Minhāj*

We saw that *al-naẓm* is dependent on the idea of interrelationships in al-Jurjānī's discourse. This is also true in al-Qarṭājannī's discourse, thus, he compares between a passage and a word in that the goodness of a passage depends on the interrelationships between its lines just as the goodness of a word depends on the interrelationships between its letters. Similarly, he compares between a poem and an expression in that the eloquence of a poem depends on the interrelationships between its passages just as the eloquence of an expression depends on the interrelationships between its words. These interrelationships happen via the observance of *al-tanāsub* (appropriateness) in the structure of poetry, as will be shown below.

Gelder, a contemporary Arabist, however, fails to recognize any significance in these structural comparisons. He says,

These comparisons are by no means as exact as they appear to be. For, whereas clear boundaries are crossed by combining words into ‘expressions’ (into the realm of syntax) or by combining ‘letters’ (*ḥurūf*) into words (from phonology into morphology and semantics), there is no such clarity between the levels of lines and passages or between passages and poems. (“Critics and Craftsman” 33)

Gelder’s reading of these comparisons is unjustifiably confined to one way of looking at them and it ignores other potential readings. He considers the comparison between a word and a passage to be loose due to the fact that while constructing a word includes a transition from the realm of phonology to that of morphology, constructing a passage does not include such a transition. Similarly, the comparison between an expression and a poem is loose because the composition of an expression contains a move from the realm of morphology to the realm of syntax, but the composition of a poem has no such move.

To me, Gelder misses the main point upon which al-Qarṭājannī’s comparisons are based, which is the idea of التناسب *al-tanāsub* (appropriateness), which represents the “mother principle” of rhetoric for al-Qarṭājannī (al-Wahībī 226). Appropriateness is the suitability and harmonization between different parts of poetry such as meanings, words, lines and passages. al-Qarṭājannī explains that,

كلما وردت أنواع الشيء وضروبه مترتبة على نظام متشاكل وتأليف متناسب كان ذلك أدعى لتعجيب النفس وإيلاعها بالاستمتاع من الشيء (221) . . .

الأبيات إذا حسنت حسنت الفصول المؤلفة منها إذا رتبت على ما يجب ووضع بعضها من بعض على ما ينبغي كما أن ذلك في الكلم المفردة كذلك. وكذلك يحسن نظم القصيدة من الفصول الحسان كما يحسن انتلاف الكلام من الألفاظ الحسان إذا كان تأليفها منها على ما يجب. (259)

When the parts and the components of something exist in an arrangement that is based on a harmonious system and an appropriate composition, the psyche would be more astonished and more provoked to enjoy that thing . . .

When lines are perfect, by being arranged as they should be and compounded with each other as they should be, the passages that consist of them will be perfect as well, just as is the case in single words. Similarly, the composition of a poem becomes perfect when its passages are perfect as long as they are arranged as they should be, just as the composition of a speech becomes perfect when its vocables are perfectly arranged as they should be.

According to the general rule stated in the first passage, when the components of a word (i.e., letters) have a harmonious and appropriate structure, the word would be more beautiful and thus better received. Hence, we can understand the second passage as when the components of a passage (i.e., lines) are well-structured by being harmonious and appropriate to each other, the passage would be perfect, just as is the case in a single word.

This understanding stems from al-Qarṭājannī himself as he shows that a word gains elegance by consisting of appropriate letters; that is, letters whose articulation points⁹ are distant from each other and whose order makes them not difficult to pronounce (198). The examples of this issue are probably mentioned in the lost part of the book (198.ff). However, other critics, to whom al-Qarṭājannī sometimes refers, usually give the following examples for words whose letters are not appropriate to each other: *ifrinqa* ‘ifrinqa’ “افرنقوا” (go away) and *hu’khu* ‘هعخع’ (a plant that camels eat) (See for example, al-Jāḥiz, *al-Bayān* 1:65; Ibn Sinān, 64; Ibn Ja‘far, 74, 172).¹⁰ Hence, just as the appropriateness between the letters credits a word, the appropriateness between the lines credits a passage.

To summarize this point, al-Qarṭājannī’s comparison between a passage that consists of lines and a word that consists of letters aims at informing us of the importance of appropriateness between the lines (as will be further shown below); they should smoothly follow from each other like the letters of a word. Similarly, al-Qarṭājannī’s comparison between a poem and an expression affirms the importance of binding the different components of a poem (i.e., passages) in an appropriate way that bestows the poem with eloquence, just as the appropriate bonding of the components of a sentence (i.e., words) bestows it with eloquence.

al-Tanāsub, appropriateness, is thus the motor of al-Qarṭājannī’s *al-naẓm*. Upon it, we can determine whether a structure is good or weak. If we look at figure 1.4, we can find that “meanings,” “psyche” and “positioning” are the most consistently attached terms to

⁹ The articulation points are the places where letters are emitted, e.g., tongue, throat, lips and nasal cavity. For more explanation see, <http://www.abouttajweed.com/index.php/tajweed-rules/32-articulation-points-and-articulation-areas-of-the-arabic-letters/19-places-of-articulation> (access 11/26/2015).

¹⁰ In English, I would personally think of “soliloquy,” “Massachusetts” and “statistics” as similar examples.

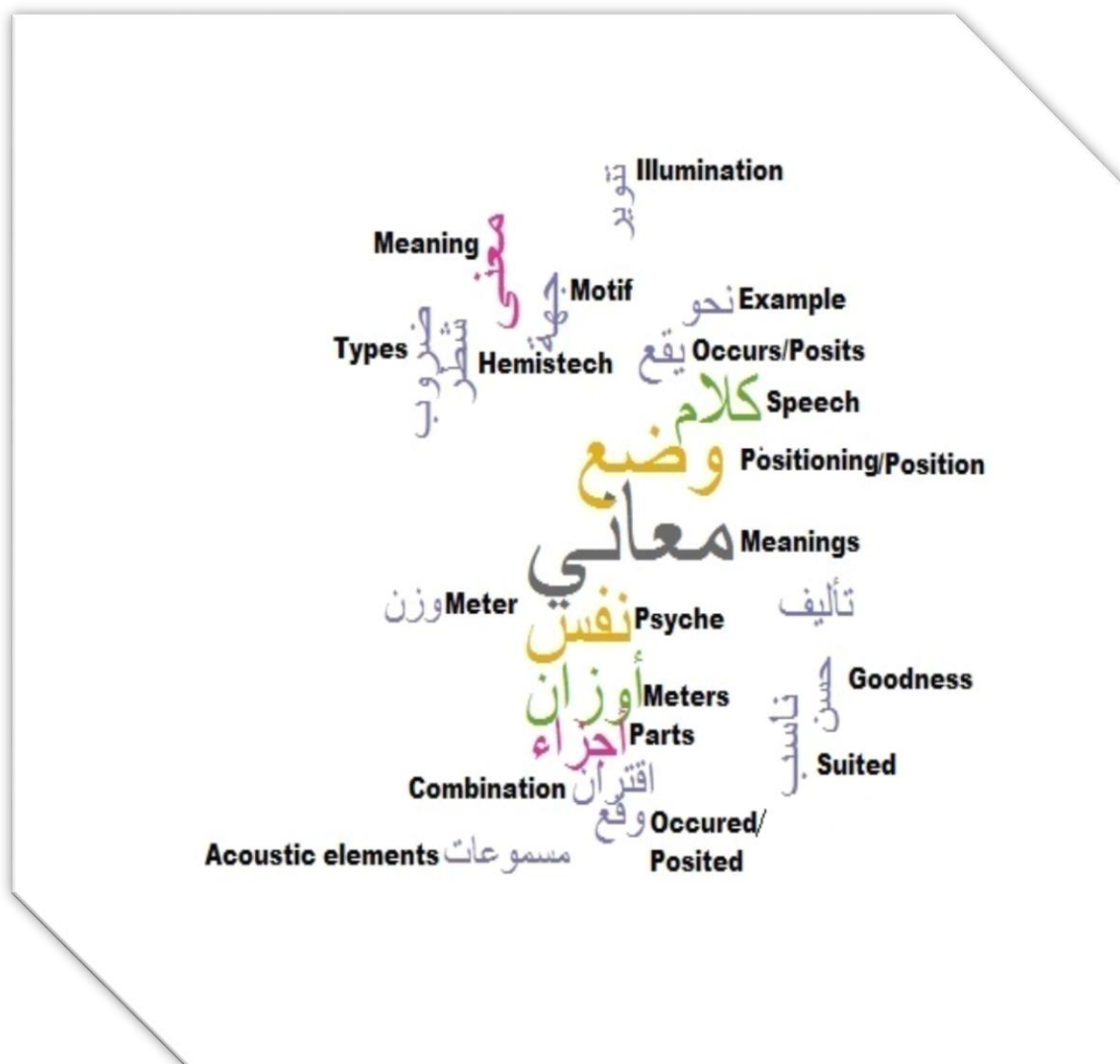


Figure 1.4: Top 20 most frequent terms within 5 key-word-context of *al-tanāsub* (appropriateness) in Ḥāzīm al-Qarṭājannī's *Minhāj*

al-tanāsub, which plus its variants, appears 208 times in the book. It is surprisingly interesting to see that the word *psyche* is very frequently used with *al-tanāsub*, which indicates the intimacy that al-Qarṭājannī establishes between the structure of poetry and the psyche of the audience. *al-Tanāsub* makes the contents of a poem more influential on the psyche because mankind has a natural interest in observing the similarities and contrasts between different things. We will see below that *al-tanāsub* can be acoustic or formal in general, or meaningful. These three types are meant to influence and startle the audience's

psyches, making poetry achieve its ultimate aesthetic and pragmatic goal, which is to entice the receiver to take a position for the good and against the evil. The “positioning” of “meanings” plays an essential role in achieving such a psycho-aesthetic function of the poem. So, we can say that *al-tanāsub* is the “positioning” of “meanings” in a way that makes them more appealing to the “psyche” of the addressee.

For a poem, a passage and a line, al-Qarṭājannī abstracts the following structural and thematic techniques of *al-tanāsub*:

1. It is better and more effective to make a semantic relationship between the beginning of a line and its rhyme. This relationship can be similarity, contrast, compartmentalization, etc. It requires a poet to think about his rhyme-word first then to shape the beginning of the line in a way that befits the rhyme-word (250).
2. “The components of the passages [i.e., the lines] . . . must be aurally and conceptually appropriate, proportionate and not different from each other in such a way that makes each line as if it were isolated and not accommodated in a meaningful or verbal structure” (260). This implies that the transition from one line to another should not be clumsy; rather, it should be smooth and subtle. This might be achieved via making the meaning of a line as a result of, or as the contrary of, or as an example of the meaning of the line before (Abū Mūsā, *Taqrīb* 168).
3. *al-Taṣrī‘*. The first hemistich of the first line of a poem shall end with a word that rhymes with the terminal rhyme of the line, endowing the line with both internal and terminal rhymes (254).

4. The first line of the poem *المطلع al-maṭlaʿ* should be endowed with a meaning that enthralls the psyche of the receiver, e.g., interrogation, amazement, supplication or a vocative case. Also *al-maṭlaʿ* should hint at the overall goal or purpose of the poem aurally and/or thematically. For example, if the poem is erotic, the first line may include smooth words and/or meanings that enchant the hearer. If it is a war poem, strong words and meanings are in order (254-55, 279).
5. Throughout the poem, a poet should arrange his motifs (passages) according to their nearness to the psyches. For instance, if a poem has panegyric motifs and love motifs, love motifs should come first and be smoothly followed by the panegyric motifs. For love naturally attracts the attention so when the praise comes, it would be better received and thus have a stronger impact (260, 275).
6. The last line of a poem *المقطع al-maqṭaʿ* should reveal to the audience that the poem has come to its end. Meanwhile, it should elegantly wrap up the main idea or purpose of the poem, maybe in a proverb, a gnomic phrase, a sententious or persuasive statement. This would leave the hearer with a good impression about the poem. Therefore, no obfuscating meaning nor obscure word should be mentioned at the end (256, 276).
7. The first line in each passage, termed as “the passage’s head,” should have a topical connection with the end of the preceding passage (262); meanwhile, it should enthrallingly mark the beginning of a new passage and attract the hearer to its motif. al-Qarṭājannī terms this technique as *التسويم al-taswīm*

(*head-marking*), which originally describes the white area on the head of a brown or black horse (267).

8. Throughout each passage, it is better and more effective to bring molecular meanings first and then integrative meanings. This way results in “an amazement in the psyche and a submission to the contents of the speech” (266).

9. A passage should end with a statement of motif that wraps up its overall meaning. This can take the form of a proverb, a gnomic statement, a persuasive statement that both extracts and affirms the motif, or it can take the form of imagery that fantasizes the motif. The wording of this statement needs more beautification since it is the last thing the hearer would receive from the passage. al-Qarṭājannī terms this technique as التحجيل *al-tahjīl* (*leg-marking*), which originally describes the white fetlocks of a brown or black horse (270-71).

10. Passages should be proportionate in terms of their length, so no passage becomes very long while the others remain very short (260).

These techniques include different relationships of “appropriateness” to sequentialize the different meanings and parts of a poem. They embody the title of al-Qarṭājannī’s book, that is, they represent what he considers as the method of the eloquent ones in their compositions. Thus, when a poem conforms to these rules, it achieves eloquence.

An eloquent poem is thus a block of appropriate and harmonious parts. Appropriateness exists within each line, within each passage, between the different lines, between the different passages, and within the whole poem. Whether meaningful or merely

formal, appropriateness is the cement by which a poem is structured and it generates psychological as well as aesthetic effects to the audience. These effects are eloquence, which I understand as the ultimate meaning for al-Qarṭājannī's theory; a meaning that is more abstract and wider than the meanings of single words and sentences, it is a meaning that is produced by the structuration of these meanings and, at the same time, it has an impact on the reception of the collectivity of these meanings by the audience.

Within a single line, al-Qarṭājannī regards the rhyme-word as the pivot of the line and recommends poets to contextualize their lines in light of the rhyme-words so as to endow each line with an internal harmony. He especially requires that the first line have an internal and terminal rhyming, which is termed التصريع *al-taṣrīʿ*, in order to confer an acoustic appropriateness on the line. A good creative example for this technique, al-Qarṭājannī shows, is al-Mutanabbī's line,

أتراها لكثرة العشاق تحسب الدمع خلقة في المآقي
(al-Mutanabbī 1: 101; al-Qarṭājannī 255)

Atarāha li Kathrat al- 'Ushshāqī Taḥsabu al-Dam 'a Khilqatan fi al-M'āqī

Do you think that, due to a multitude of lovers, she believes that tears are naturally persistent in the eyes?

Between two successive lines, the audience should not encounter torn or sharp transitions. This becomes specifically important when the first line marks the end of a passage and the second line opens another passage. al-Qarṭājannī shows two types of the shift between two passages, or two motifs. First, التخلص *al-takhalluṣ* (disposition) which describes an intentional and gradual shift by making each motif gently lead to the next motif (285). As

an example of this type, al-Qarṭājannī cites the following lines from al-Mutanabbī's panegyric to Kāfūr,

أعجب من ذا الهجر والوصل أعجب	أغالب فيك الشوق والشوق أغلب
بغیضا تنائی أو حبیباً تقرب	أما تغلط الأيام في بأن أرى
عشية شرقي الحدالي وغرب	ولله سيري ما أقل تنية

(al-Mutanabbī 1: 301-02, al-Qarṭājannī 268-69)

I contend with my yearning regarding you, and yearning prevails, and I
marvel at this banishment, and this union were more marvellous.

Will not the days err concerning me, in that I may see them remove far the
hated one, and bring near the beloved?

How remarkable my journey was? How little was my tarrying on the
evening I passed on the east side al-Ḥadālā and Ghurrah, (al-Mutanabbī
96; Arberry's translation).

In the first two lines, al-Mutanabbī presents the motif of his excessive longing to his patron, who continuously neglects him. In the third line, he starts another motif that concerns his long journey and unsettlement. The thematic appropriateness between these motifs lies in that both depict the poet's hardship, agony and unfulfilled desires. There is also a verbal appropriateness between these motifs that lies in the contrast between "the days" in the second line and "the evening" in the third; and in the analogy between the exclamatory

question of the second line and the exclamation of the third line.¹¹ Therefore, the shift from the first motif to the second is made gradually.

The second type of shift is unintentional and abrupt. It occurs when a poet abruptly turns from a topic to another, usually in one line, which gives a sense of spontaneity (Meisami 79). Following other critics, al-Qarṭājannī terms this type as استطراد *Istiṭrād* (digression) (286). He gives the following line as an example of *Istiṭrād*,

إن كنت كاذبة الذي حدثتني فنجوت منجى الحارث بن هشام (Ibn Thābit 214; al-Qarṭājannī 286)

If you were lying about what you told me, you shall be rescued like al-Hārith Ibn Hishām's rescue

The poet here shifts from the motif of his beloved (in the first hemistich and what precedes it) to the satire of an opponent, which begins from the second hemistich. To al-Qarṭājannī, there is no liaison between the meaning of the first hemistich and that of the second; the poet rather abruptly digresses from love to satire.

In general, al-Qarṭājannī shows that the distribution and the shifting between the different motifs/passages in a poem is a crucial aspect of the poetic craft. His focus is on the audience, that he needs to find the different parts and meanings smoothly following each other, or else the poem would lose its attractiveness. Therefore, al-Qarṭājannī compares the reader or listener of a disordered poem to the one who, while walking smoothly, suddenly encounters hard bumps in his way (288).

¹¹ Arberry translated this exclamation, in the third line, into an exclamatory question; however, there is no question in the original text.

Among the approaches to increase the influence of a poem, al-Qarṭājannī elucidates that poets should begin their poems with what is more attached to the psyche of the audience, which is mostly love, then they may smoothly shift to their other motifs.

Eloquent poets usually start their poems by depicting a lover, who is usually the poet himself, longing for his beloved, weeping on her ruined abode, or in a down-heart status. This start engenders a passion in the hearers' psyches and provokes them to live the poem. After this, poets mention the memories between both persons; then, they depict the beloved, her characteristics and luxury, etc (274). This part pictures the poet's agony, unfulfilled desires and heartbrokenness. By a relationship of contrast, the poet then presents happiness, generosity and promising hope by turning to praising his patron.

al-Qarṭājannī explains the proper structure of the different panegyric motifs as following,

فأما المديح المتخلص إليه من نسيب فالوجه أن يصدر بتعديد فضائل الممدوح ، وأن يتلى ذلك بتعديد مواطن
بأسه وكرمه وذكر أيامه في أعدائهم. وإذا كان للممدوح سلف حسن تشفيح ذكر مآثره بذكر مآثرهم ثم يختتم
بالتمين للممدوح والدعاء له بالسعادة ودوام النعمة والظهور على الأعداء وما ناسب ذلك. (275)

As for praise, disposed after *nasīb* [love], the proper way is to begin with an enumeration of the merits of the patron. This should be followed by mentioning the incidents, which reflect his bravery and generosity, and mentioning his days [of victory] over his enemies. If the patron has a well-reputed ancestry, it is better to combine the mention of his merits with theirs. This should be concluded with good wishes for the patron, praying

for his happiness, the continuity of his bliss, defeating the enemies and the like.

This passage shows a tripartite sequentiality of praise in that it begins with something, followed by something and concludes with something. We can see that the beginning and the end are both general in that a poet begins by mentioning the general virtues of his patron and ends by presenting his best wishes to him. The middle part, however, consists of three specific motifs. First, celebrating the inherent and deep-rooted nobility and dignity of the patron, who is usually a ruler, embodied in the historical fame of his former fathers. Second, celebrating the patron's conduct in war. Here, the poet refers to the battles of the patron and depicts his aggressiveness and destructiveness with the enemies. Third, celebrating the patron's benevolence and hospitality. Here, the poet usually depicts himself as a case in point. Hence, the praise streams from the general to the specific to the general again.

We can then chart the structures of praise and love as following:

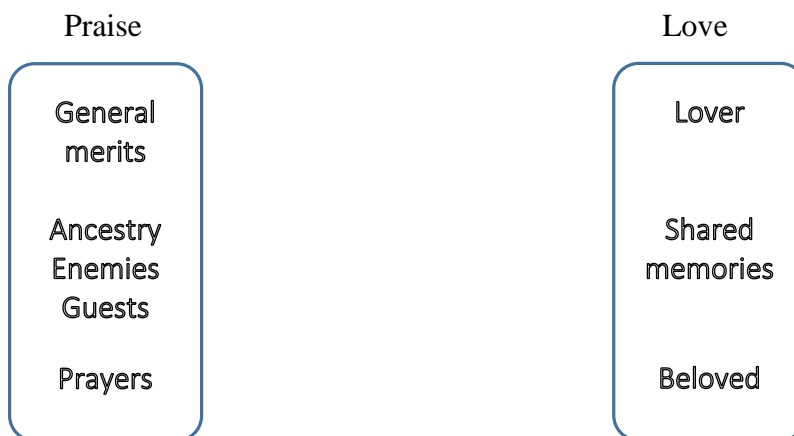


Figure 1.5: Two thematic structures

We can notice that al-Qarṭājannī's conception of the structure of praise is parallelistic in that both the beginning and the end are general but the middle is specific and unique. Similarly, his conception of the structure of love is parallelistic in that it begins with a description of the lonely lover, ends with a description of the unattainable beloved, but the middle contains their memories, so the middle is also unique. Hence, within the theme of love and the theme of praise, there occurs a structural appropriateness between the beginning and the end of each theme. Furthermore, we can see that the praise and the love themes share the interactiveness of their middle parts, which forms another example of structural appropriateness between the middle parts of two different clusters of motifs.

Within a single passage, al-Qarṭājannī has a specific understanding for how appropriateness and harmony should exist. Following the Arabic love to horses, al-Qarṭājannī applies the bodily structure of a horse to the structure of a poetic passage. In that, the white patches on the horse's head (*al-taswīm*) and those on its fetlocks (*al-tahjīl*) form decorative locks between which there are the different parts of the brown or black body. So, the front and the end of the horse are analogous to each other and distinct from the rest of the body. Similarly, a passage should start with an enthralling line (the passage's head) that introduces the motif, end with a beautiful summation of the motif, and between the opening and the end, the meanings of the motif should be loaded. Therefore, "the analogy between the beauty of the head of the passage and the beauty of its end becomes like the analogy between *al-ghurrah* (i.e., *al-taswīm*) and *al-tahjīl* in the horse" (*Minhāj* 268).

The appropriateness that al-Qarṭājannī is trying to prescribe here is the relationship between premises and conclusions or the specific and the general in that a passage starts

with an introduction and different individual meanings. Together these form the premise(s), then a wrap up in *al-tahjīl* position, which functions like a conclusion of the passage.

We can enlarge the binary of *al-taswīm* and *al-tahjīl* to become applicable to the structure of the whole poem. In that, a poem begins with a sententious statement that alludes to its general purpose, ends with a similar statement that wraps up the motif of the last passage and the purpose of the whole poem, and all other motifs are loaded in between. Hence, just as the white patches of a horse embellish its body by decorating its highest and lowest parts, the first and the last lines of a poem meaningfully and verbally highlight and decorate its beginning and end.

Thus, we can recognize a parallelism between the structure of a passage and the structure of a poem in al-Qarṭājannī's discourse. In that, the beginning of both share the same duties, that is, to signal the beginning of a unit of speech and to attract and enthrall the audience. Similarly, the end of a poem and the end of a passage are expected to be specifically beautiful and to intelligently wrap up their general ideas. Thus, a passage is like a micro-poem within a poem. Both structurally analogize each other just as a microcosm and a macrocosm.

This implicates that a poem mingles molecular and integrative meanings and distributes them in the structure of *al-taswīm*, *al-tahjīl* and what falls between them. The combination of these two types of meanings is what al-Qarṭājannī regards as an important thematic aspect of poetry (295, 1986 edition).¹² Molecular meanings are those which

¹² He says, “ومن القصائد ما يكون اعتماد الشاعر في فصولها على أن يضمناها معاني جزئية تكون مفهوماتها شخصية ، ومنها ما يقصد “ في فصولها أن تضمن المعاني الكلية التي مفهوماتها جنسية أو نوعية ، ومنها ما يقصد في فصولها أن تكون المعاني المضمنة إيها مؤتلفة بين الجزئية والكلية. وهذا هو المذهب الذي يجب اعتماده لحسن موقع الكلام به من النفس” “Some poets tend to include molecular meanings which have private ideas in the passages of their poems, some others tend to include integrative meanings which have generic or typical ideas in the passages of their poems and some others tend to

inform about an individual, be it an individual event or person (Muḥammad 159). For instance, when a poet depicts a specific feeling or event, he is poeticizing a molecular meaning. By contrast, integrative meanings are not about an individual but rather about a general theme that applies for different individual events or persons; they do not depend in their meaningfulness on a momentary or a temporal event or character but they work in a timeless structure of meanings. The most common examples of integrative meanings are statements of wisdom because they usually present a general meaning that applies to different cases. al-Qarṭājannī mentions that a good example for this is Zuhair's line "Do the Khuṭṭayy lances grow [produce] but the heavy spears? And are palm trees cultivated but in their indigenous fields?" (272). This line ends a panegyric poem by signifying that the origin of a good thing is always a good thing as well, be it a lance, a palm tree or the praised people, who inherited dignity from their forefathers. If we take "palm tree" as a symbol of food and feeding the guests, and if we take "lances" as a symbol of power, we can then see that this line with its two allegorical wise questions integrates the deep-rooted nobility, power and richness of the praised people as well as the general idea that good comes from and produces good.

To al-Qarṭājannī, the mingling of molecular and integrative meanings is an essential aspect of the structure of a poem because this mingling makes a poem have a greater effect on the psyche of the audience, especially when the molecular meanings lead to the integrative meanings as premises lead to conclusions.

incorporate both molecular and integrative meanings in their poems' passages. And this [last approach] is the approach that should be chosen because it makes the speech elegant to the psyche." (This text is incomplete in the edition that I generally refer to, pp. 266.)

In this structure of meanings, the poem would be neither a limited insular self-expression that has no link to what is beyond its molecular subject nor a general expression that lacks subjectivity. Rather, the poem would have its specific situational or momentary context as well as a general timeless context. The first context has molecular meanings and the second has integrative meanings, between which the poem circulates.

To me, the poetic structure, *al-naẓm*, that al-Qarṭājannī presents in his book is geometric *par excellence*. Beginning from the letters of a word and ending at the passages of the poem, al-Qarṭājannī has expounded that every component of the poem needs appropriateness with the other components. This aims at having a poem that both startles the receiver and provokes him to adopt the good and abandon the evil, which is the ultimate aim of poetry for al-Qarṭājannī. He asserts that the structure of poetry can “either be agreeable or repulsive for the psyches” (259). Therefore, he has manifested to us (*The Method of The Eloquent Ones*) in making an eloquent and agreeable structure, and avoiding a repulsive one.

Unlike the “meaning” we conceptualized from al-Jurjānī’s theory, which could be a meaning of a word, of grammar, of a trope, or of a compound sentence, the meaning that we can conceptualize from al-Qarṭājannī’s theory is the meaning of the structure of a poem, which we may think of as a geometric framework of meanings that is itself beautiful and so it attracts the psyche of the audience. In other words, the formation/structuration of the different parts and meanings in an aesthetic and geometric form is the main issue that al-Qarṭājannī’s theory concerns and it, being based on *al-tanāsub* appropriateness, ultimately leads to eloquence. Hence, we can well describe al-Qarṭājannī’s attempt as a theorization of the structure of meanings and the “meaning” of the structure.

Both theories of al-Jurjānī and al-Qarṭājannī best represent the medieval Arabic conception of “meaning-making”¹³ on three levels: a word, a sentence and a poem. While al-Jurjānī’s *al-naẓm* has been shown to be the motor of linguistic signification and textual eloquence, *al-tanāsub* has been shown to be the motor of poetry’s artifice and eloquence to al-Qarṭājannī. As we turn to the next two chapters, we shall comparatively look at similar theorizations of “meaning-making” that originated in the Western critical traditions during the twentieth century.

¹³ I am using “meaning-making” to imply both the production and the interpretation of meaning.

Chapter 2: Deconstruction: Meaning as *différance*

There is a clear terminological contradiction between deconstruction and arrangement *al-nazm*. This spontaneously suggests that there is an opposition between the theory of al-Jurjānī and the theory of Derrida. In this chapter, I attempt to compare and contrast the two theories in terms of their handling of the question of meaning. Given the abundant writings of Derrida, I frame my reading of his theory within two of his texts, i.e., *Of Grammatology* and “Signature Event Context.” The former book represents the “sacred book” of deconstruction, in which we find Derrida’s deconstruction of Saussure’s *Semiology* and the problem of writing, which shows us the politics of Derrida’s understanding of “meaning.” The other source contains Derrida’s important critique of conceiving of language as a communication of intentional meanings, which further guides us to his understanding of the nature of the textual meaning.

Like al-Jurjānī’s theory, Derrida’s deconstruction came as a response to a traditional Western intellectual hypothesis that he considered wrong, i.e., logocentrism. The philosophy of Derrida aims at criticizing the belief in centrism of thought and presence (the idea that there is a clear-cut and transcendental origin of both). In the context of Western philosophy, this centrism has been traditionally attributed to *logos*, the idea that the *logos* word is the origin and the essence of “truth.” Thus, Derrida terms this phenomenon as logocentrism and argues that it extracts the long-standing Western metaphysics of presence.

In his writings, Derrida makes extensive analyses and critiques of many Western thinkers from Plato to his contemporaries such as John Searle. However, his engagement with structural theoreticians is especially central to his philosophy because French Structuralism could be said to be the womb, which birthed Derrida during the 1960s. Although Derrida saw Structuralism as an anti-logocentric philosophy, he claims that it reaffirms what it negates; therefore, he presents his philosophy as post-structuralism (Jefferson, “Structuralism and Post-Structuralism” 104).

Among the structuralists Derrida discusses, F. Saussure is a central one whose influence furnished the development of major Derridian brainchildren such as *différance*, originary trace, arche-writing and iterability, in which we shall trace Derrida’s theorization of “meaning.” However, in order to understand these terms, we should first shed some light on Saussure’s semiological arguments.

Saussure’s first aim in *Course in General Linguistics* is to establish linguistics as a discipline of its own, independent from philology, history and the other fields of study to which the study of language had traditionally been attached. He looks at language/*langue* as a system of signs, which has its implementation in speech/*parole*. *Langue* and *parole* are essentially different. *Langue* is an abstract system but *parole* is the actual speech that we utter. Saussure gives the following remarks about the *langue/parole* distinction:

In separating language from speaking we are at the same time separating:

(1) what is social from what is individual . . . Whereas speech is heterogeneous, language, as defined, is homogeneous. It is a system of signs in which the only essential thing is the union of meanings and sound-images. (14-15)

On the one hand, *langue*, or language, is a social and homogenous set of norms and rules that every member of the society shares and adheres to, making communication possible. This social or collective nature of language means that there is no individuality in it. In other words, no one can individually alter a language because language ceases to exist once it loses its social and aggregative nature. *Parole*, or speech, on the other hand, is an individual act and so it is heterogeneous. It differs from one speaker to another according to different factors, e.g., intellect, background, mood, etc.

Langue consists of signs. Each sign consists of a sound-image (or, a signifier) and a signified. The signifier is the sound that we associate with a meaning. This meaning, concept, or idea is the signified. For instance, the sound “tree” signifies the image or the idea of tree. Very importantly, Saussure says, “[the sound-image] is not the material sound, a purely physical thing, but the psychological imprint of the sound, the impression that it makes on our senses” (66). What Saussure wants to say here is that the signifier is not a sound; it is a sound-image. The combination between *sound* and *image* is meant to bestow a psychological and cognitive nature on such a term. Any sound-image cannot be what it is unless it has been psychologically registered in our psyches. The ear can hear and listen to many sounds, but only those sounds that are registered in our psyches can then make impressions on our senses. As an example, we can hear the sound “tree” and the sound “oree,” but only the former makes an impression because it is registered in our minds.

Langue has three major laws that Saussure discusses, i.e., arbitrariness, difference and opposition. Arbitrariness refers to the relationship between the signifier and the signified. There is no necessary reason the signifier “tree” means a tall, branched piece of wood that grows and has leaves. Nor is there any linkage between “tree” and “three.” There

is no inherent similarity between their respective meanings. Saussure remarks, “the bond between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary... *the linguistic sign is arbitrary*” (67).

Nonetheless, the arbitrariness of the linguistic sign should be seen in the light of the conventionality of language. Language allows no individual to alter its system because it has to remain as a social and collective system, so communication remains possible. The only reason that an addresser and an addressee communicate directly with each other is that both share the same language. Thus, despite the arbitrariness of the signs, no one can freely alter them; they are conventional.

The arbitrariness of the relation between a given signifier and an idea necessitates differences between the signifiers and between the ideas. For, differences that exist between signifiers allow each of them to signify a specific idea that the others do not signify. Saussure shows, “The important thing in the word is . . . the phonic differences that make it possible to distinguish this word from all others, for differences carry signification” (118). For instance, the signifier “dog” means the idea of dog – as a four-legged mammal of the canine variety that is easily domesticated – because the signifier “dog” is different from all other English signifiers and so it does not signify their signifieds. Consequently, “dog” only signifies dog.

Thus, if we consider the relationship between the signifiers or that between the signifieds, it is difference and negativity. However, if we consider a sign in its totality, as a linguistic term, we can find positivity in that the sign as a positive unit between a signifier and a signified engenders a value, i.e., meaning that can be transmitted from one speaker to another.

According to Saussure, the relationship between signs, or positive terms is oppositional; “two signs, each having a signified and signifier, are not different but only distinct. Between them there is only opposition. The entire mechanism of language . . . is based on oppositions” (121). It seems that Saussure refuses to label the relationship between the different signs as difference because they share the same construction, i.e., signifier + signified, they are not different; rather, they are similar in this respect. However, since each sign is distinct in its meaning and that this distinction cannot be realized except by opposing each sign to all other signs, Saussure terms the relationship between the different signs as *opposition*.

He then shows two types of this opposition. The first is syntagmatic, which describes the linearity of signs in a discourse. The combination of two signs or more produces a syntagm such as “*re-lire* ‘re-read,’ *contre tous* ‘against everyone,’ *la vie humaine* ‘human life,’ *Dieu est bon* ‘God is good,’ *s’il fait beau temps, nous sortirons* ‘if the weather is nice, we’ll go out” (*Saussure* 123). This shows that syntagms include compounds, derivatives, phrases and complete sentences. The second type of the opposition between signs is associative. This type describes signs that are not syntagmatized in a discourse but mentally associated with each other. For instance, we mentally link between cat, mat, fat, hat or write, book, pen, pencil, publish, read, etc. The associative relations are very resilient so they include similarity in meanings or pronunciation, antitheses, historical associations, etc (*Saussure* 125-26).

With these taxonomies and terms, Saussure develops an approach, or rather a science to study the concept of signification and the life of signs. He names this science *Semiology*. He explains, “A science that studies the life of signs . . . I shall call it *semiology*.

Semiology would show what constitutes signs, what laws govern them” (16). Then he shows that if semiology studies signs in general, linguistics, as a branch of semiology, studies the linguistic signs in particular.

Having established these semiological and linguistic principles, Saussure proclaims that linguistics has its object only in the spoken language, and not in the written language. In his chapter ‘Graphic Representation of Language,’ Saussure argues that: 1- language is one thing, and writing is something else; 2- writing endangers language.

First, Saussure regards writing as a system of signs that represents and signifies the spoken language, which is another system of signs. Thus, a written sign has its signifier as the written shape of the word and has its signified as the spoken word. In other words, the signification of the written word is limited to the vocal signifier, which in turn signifies a concept, or meaning. This distinction between speech and writing stems from Saussure’s conception of the bond between a spoken word and a concept as a true and natural bond, whereas the bond between a written word and a concept is superficial and fictitious (*Saussure* 25). In other words, while speech represents the nature or default of language, writing represents an unnatural visualization of language.

Consequently, in the second argument, Saussure elaborates that people usually consider writing to be at the core of language because it is visual and it reaches more space and time than speech does. Most speakers understand the word “language” as writing rather than speaking. Hence, writing “manages to usurp the main role [of speech]” (24).

Writing, says Saussure, has a prominent shortcoming, which is the irrational spelling. For example, spelling ‘knee’ for the spoken sound *nee*, and the French word

oiseau (bird) for the spoken sound *wasɔ* (30). Another shortcoming is the addition of a vowel to the end of some English words, which creates a pseudo syllable that is inaudible, e.g., can, cane; mad, made (*Course* 29). In effect, Saussure's name has the same problem in Arabic, where it is written and pronounced as *sūsīr*. Thus, Saussure concludes "writing obscures language; it is not a guise for language but a disguise" (30).

Saussure's semiology has been so thought-provoking for linguists, literary critics and philosophers both pro and against Saussure. Among those, Derrida devoted the first half of his major work *Of Grammatology* to discuss Saussure and present "grammatology" as a substitute for "semiology" via a meticulous modification of Saussure's argument from within itself in a way that reveals "What Saussure saw without seeing, knew without being able to take into account" (Derrida, *Of Grammatology* 43).

In this book, Derrida criticizes three famous treatments of language and writing, by Saussure, Levi-Strauss and Rousseau, that represent the long-standing conception of writing as secondary and exterior to the spoken language. In his discussion, Derrida coins the term "Grammatology," which consists of *gramma* + *logos*, that is, talking about writing, or simply writing as a discipline or a science (Bradley, 5). Interestingly, throughout the book, as Harris rightly observes, Derrida totally adopts Saussure's semiological terms as a sophisticated terminology for thinking about language even if contrarily to Saussure himself (172).

While Derrida agrees with Saussure on the idea that difference is the basis of linguistic signification, he claims that it inherently contradicts Saussure's duality of the signifier and signified. He argues that the differentiation of a signifier from all other signifiers is an endless process, because the signifiers do not end. He describes this process

as *play* and argues, “One could call *play* the absence of the transcendental signified as limitlessness of play” (*Of Grammatology* 50). For instance, the signifier “tree” acquires its meaning from being differentiated from all other signifiers, but this does not mean that the process of “difference” ends at some point and the meaning of tree becomes present. Rather, this process of “difference,” or *play*, carries the meaning within itself, so without the *play*, there is no meaning. If the play stops at any point, this means that the signifiers ended, so there cannot be any more differentiation. Derrida insists that the signifiers do not end because they always trace each other, like the words of a dictionary, whenever one looks up a word, it refers him to other words and the same thing happens perennially. Thus, each word, or signifier is the locus of the *play*, and in this *play*, lies the signified. Derrida says, “the signified is originarily and essentially . . . *always already in the position of the signifier*” (*Of Grammatology* 73).

After this, Derrida articulates that the *play*, or the process of “difference cannot be thought without the idea of *trace*” (*Of Grammatology* 57). This means that each sign must retain the trace of all other signs by being *not that sign, not that sign, not that sign*, etc. For instance, the sign “tree” bears the trace of the signs “sky,” “pyramid” and “lion” by being not the signs “sky,” “pyramid” and “lion.” From this trace, the meaning of tree becomes possible. Meaning is what *trace* does or, as Derrida puts it, “the signified is originarily and essentially . . . trace” (*Of Grammatology* 73).

Derrida adds that “trace” is not a present thing, “It is that very thing which cannot let itself be reduced to the form of *presence*” (*Of Grammatology* 57). It is neither a sound, nor an image, nor an impression; “The trace *is nothing*, it is not an entity, it exceeds the question *What is?*” (*Of Grammatology* 75); therefore, trace is about *What does?* Trace

makes a word a word (i.e., it enables a word to bear a meaning). Trace thus conceived is the possibility of words. Hence, Derrida calls it *arche-trace* and *originary trace* to mark that it is the origin of the word. By these two prefixes, *arche* and *originary*, Derrida asserts that the *logos* is not the origin of truth; but rather, *trace* is the origin of *logos* and thus the origin of truth – of course Derrida always adds – “if there is such a thing.”

After these remarks on the concepts of “difference” and “originary trace,” Derrida illuminates that if *trace* is itself a word or a sign, same as difference, then we need to find other words to describe these two signs. We cannot explain a word just by repeating it; that is to say, “difference” is what it is because it is different from every other sign. Similarly, we cannot say “trace” is what it is because it bears the trace of every other sign. This means that to describe the concepts of “difference” and “trace,” we have to use the concepts “difference” and “trace,” then we would have to keep doing the same job endlessly, because difference and trace are words like all other words, and any word or sign cannot be what it is without being different, i.e., without bearing the trace of all other words. In short, we cannot have one word as a word and as the possibility of word.

To solve this problem, Derrida introduces the ~~word~~ or ~~concept~~ *différance*.¹⁴ *Différance* does not exist as a word in French nor in English. It is not a word nor a concept; rather, “Differance is...the formation of form” (Derrida, *Of Grammatology* 63). *Différance*, or the movement that composes the relation between one word and another, names the condition of naming. This “relation” and that “condition” are namely “difference” and “trace.” So, *différance* names “difference” and “trace,” without being a

¹⁴ These under erasures are employed to resemble Derrida when crossing out “sign” and “thing” after mentioning them in his definition of “*différance*,” to imply that none of them really describes the notion of *différance*, see *Of Grammatology* 19.

word or a concept like them. Différance then is the possibility of word and the possibility of conceptuality.

In effect, Derrida develops a more extended explanation of différance in his 1968 essay “Différance,” in which he remarks:

With its *a*, différance more properly refers to what in classical language would be called the origin or production of differences and the differences between differences (932-33).

Différance as temporalizing is conjoined with différance as spacing (938).

Différance is what makes the movement of signification possible. (939)

This *a* is Derrida’s innovative way to mingle the two verbs “differ” and “defer,” that is, to bring the spatio-temporal differences into the structure of each sign. Différance as spacing implies the idea that each sign extends along a chain of signs to trace the other signs in language. It is a continuous movement between signs. Différance as deferral implies the notion that when every sign refers to every other sign, there exists a temporal movement, in other words, the meaning of a sign does not lie within the sign itself; rather, it is deferred through a chain of other signs.

An empirical example of this ‘spacing’ and ‘deferral’ is the dictionary (Spivak xvii). When one looks up any word, the definition of the word refers the reader to other words, which in turn refers the reader to other words, and the same job would happen continuously. This referring is both spatial and temporal; spatial in terms of the different signs that refer to each other, and temporal in terms of the deferral that happens each time one looks up a word. So, to look up the word “tree” means to move through the different

signs that exist in the definition of “tree” like wood, plant, water, green, species, etc. Thus, the meaning of tree does not originate until the sign “tree” becomes differentiated and deferred from the other signs. This movement of difference and deferral is what Derrida coins as “différance.”

Before we continue with Derrida, it is interesting to see the centrality of the idea of difference in his theory and in al-Jurjānī’s. For both, “difference” forms a condition for having a word. There is, however, a slight difference in that Derrida shows the necessity of having a deferral whenever a difference occurs; al-Jurjānī does not seem to have thought about this bond between difference and deferral. However, both notions concur in his discussion of postponing and prepositioning certain words as a rhetorical technique that intensifies the meaning of a sentence. So, here also postponing entails difference in the meaning. That said, postponing coincides with difference in both al-Jurjānī’s and Derrida’s theories despite the different contexts in which they discuss both ideas.

Nonetheless, Derrida’s deconstruction of Saussure’s signified seems to conflict with al-Jurjānī’s theory: for, both al-Jurjānī and Derrida consider the relationship between a word and its concept to be a conventional relationship; however, al-Jurjānī derives from this conventionality that a word does not initiate meaning, it just signifies. Put another way, a word does not bring its meaning/signified into existence; rather, it only vocalizes and marks it, making it communicable. This implicates 1- that the existence of the signified is independent from the signifier; that is, a signified does not need a signifier to be what it is; 2- that the signified precedes the signifier. As we saw in the example of “ ‘Aflaj,” there was no need to bring the word “ ‘Aflaj” until we found a mental image of a thing that has no word; only at that time, the signifier “ ‘Aflaj” was developed. In fact, al-Jurjānī wonders

how we can imagine that a social group agrees to assign a word for something that they had never thought about! He says,

والمواضعة لا تكون ولا تتصور إلا على معلوم ، فمحال أن يوضع اسم أو غير اسم لغير معلوم ، لأن
المواضعة كالإشارة ، فكما أنك إذا قلت: خذ ذاك ، لم تكن هذه الإشارة لتعرف السامع المشار إليه في نفسه ،
ولكن ليعلم أنه المقصود من بين سائر الأشياء. (Dalā'il 539-540)

Conventionality can neither happen nor be imagined to happen except for a known thing. It is impossible to assign a noun or anything other than a noun to an unknown thing because conventionality is similar to pointing to something. Therefore, when you say: 'take that', this gesture [the demonstrative pronoun] never informs the hearer about the thing pointed to in itself; but only allows him to know that this – from among the other things - is what is meant.

As a consequence of al-Jurjānī's insistence on the independence and precedence of the signified from the signifier, he does not doubt that language (as THE signifier) comes only after thought (as THE signified). A speaker first develops feelings and meanings in his ego then decides to express them in speech, so meanings exist first and language exists second. Yet, one may contend that when one thinks, words keep circulating in his mind so we only think through language and words; thus, language is the possibility of thinking. al-Jurjānī refutes this objection in the following passage,

سبيل ذلك سبيل إنسان يتخيل دائما في الشيء قد رآه وشاهده أنه كأنه يراه وينظر إليه، وأن مثاله نصب
عينيه. فكما لا يوجب هذا أن يكون رائيا له ، وأن يكون الشيء موجودا في نفسه، كذلك لا يكون تخيله أنه

كأنه ينطق بالألفاظ ، موجبا أن يكون ناطقا بها ، وأن تكون موجودة في نفسه ، حتى يجعل ذلك سببا إلى

جعل الفكر فيها. (Dalā'il 416)

This is the same as a person who always imagines something, which he saw and witnessed as if he is seeing it and looking at it and that its figure stands in front of his eyes. Just as this entails neither that this person is seeing it [the thing] nor that this thing exists in his psyche, his imagination of uttering words [while thinking] entails neither that he is uttering them nor that they [the words] exist in his ego in a way that justifies claiming that his thinking happens in them [the words].

In this passage, al-Jurjānī compares the inner/mental speech that happens when one thinks about something to imagining seeing something, e.g., a bird. In both cases, we do not have a real sight nor a real utterance. What seems to be at stake here is the notion that a word is not a mental thing; rather, it is a material thing, either audible or written. Thus, the mental usage of the name of something when one thinks about it is not a usage of a word but rather a usage of a concept, or the psychological code of that thing. This ties up with the above notion of the independence of the signified (meaning) from the signifier (word). So, when one thinks about something, he does not think in the word of what he thinks about; rather, he thinks in the mental image or the concept of that thing, which automatically calls its linguistic code in the mind. However, this does not mean that the linguistic code, i.e., the word, is the possibility of thinking nor the object of thinking. To al-Jurjānī, the existence of words in one's mind while thinking does not imply that his thinking happens in and via the words because, in this case, words do not really exist in any form. They just resemble

the fantasized image of an absent bird, which does not mean that the actual bird attends in the mind, only its mental image attends.

To rephrase the last point, al-Jurjānī separates between the idea and the word pronounced, and he argues that the locus of thinking is the idea, not the word pronounced. He clarifies that the mental attendance of the word when one thinks is not an attendance of the word itself but rather it is an attendance of the psychological imprint of the word, or the mental image of the word. The word never exists until one expresses his thought. This implies that thought, or idea precedes word, or signifier.

The Jurjānian argument that the signified precedes the signifier, and thus thought precedes language, resembles a core traditional position that Derrida problematizes by his deconstruction. He says,

The reassuring evidence within which Western tradition had to organize itself and must continue to live would therefore be as follows: the order of the signified is never contemporary, is at best the subtly discrepant inverse or parallel—discrepant by the time of a breath—from the order of the signifier. And the sign must be the unity of a heterogeneity, since the signified (sense or thing, noeme or reality) is not in itself a signifier. (*Of Grammatology* 18)

Derrida criticizes this view for postulating that there is a clear-cut origin, i.e., signified that differs from and precedes a clear-cut supplement, i.e., signifier; moreover, that the signifier should be a word but the signified is a sense or a thing. He articulates that the labeling and ordering of these elements do not accurately describe them. For, the thing itself, i.e.,

nominatum, is a signifier because it makes us generate a mental image (signified) of it (he looks at this through Peirce's semiotics, *Of Grammatology* 49-50); so indeed the signifier pre-exists the signified, but the signifier here is not a word at all. By the same token, when people conventionally assign a word to a signified, the word becomes a signified whose signifier is the concept; meanwhile, the concept is itself a signified whose signifier is the thing. Thus, the positions of the signifier and the signified necessarily intertwine and overlap (Derrida, *Of Grammatology* 50).

This leads Derrida to argue that if each signifier (i.e., word or concept or thing) and each signified (concept or word) can occupy the position of the origin, then none of them is originary. We should note that Derrida is not simply saying that the signifier precedes the signified, which he does deny (*Of Grammatology* 324,) but rather, he is shaking the duality itself to show that if we want to say that the signifier comes belatedly from the signified, we must first see what we really mean by these terms.

From this, we can infer that Derrida does not agree on the separation, let alone the precedence, between thought and language. He contends that if thought and language must be divided in two different strata, so we can label them as signifier and signified, we should then see which can be which? Each one signifies the other, i.e., thought signifies language and in turn language signifies thought, just as the concept signifies a word and vice versa. In short, if language is a system of signs, and if thought is a sign of language, then "as a matter of fact . . . one says "language" for action, movement, thought, reflection, consciousness, unconsciousness, experience, affectivity, etc" (Derrida, *Of Grammatology* 9).

In the above comparison, we have seen that both al-Jurjānī and Derrida share the same point of departure, i.e., difference, which is the common ground from which each one takes a different approach to the understanding of word and meaning *اللفظ والمعنى*, as well as thought and language *الفكر واللغة*. The most crucial point is Derrida's consideration of non-linguistic signifiers, that is, thing and concept. This consideration does not exist in al-Jurjānī's rhetorical thinking; therefore, their conclusions are different regarding the two binaries mentioned above.

If we would like to investigate the relationship between the theories of al-Jurjānī and Derrida concerning textual meaning, not the meaning of a single word, we should first continue to see Derrida's development of his concept of *différance* as writing and iteration of meanings, which would let us understand his understanding of textual meaning.

Derrida shows that the most interesting thing about *différance* is that it is pronounced identically as difference in the French language. The difference between *différance* and difference only appears in writing, which means that *différance* only exists in writing. That is to say, in a Heideggerian fashion, writing is the house of *différance*.

At this point, Derrida declares his main argument, "I shall constantly reconfirm that writing is the other name of this difference" (*Of Grammatology* 268).

To understand this argument, we should introduce the Derridian notion of *arche-writing*. Derrida distinguishes between "vulgar writing," or the conventional idea of writing as an empirical system of marks, and "arche-writing," or writing as the origin of the signification system, or language. Ironically, the concept of arche-writing depends on Saussure's conception of writing as a mere signifier of speech. Derrida has no objection to

the idea that a written word signifies a spoken word. Indeed, he does not argue that writing precedes speech in our use of language because it is obvious that people learn writing only after they learn speaking. However, what Derrida derives from the above Saussurean conception is that if writing signifies/refers to speech or, in other words, if writing is just a signifier of a signifier; if writing, unlike speech, never directly reaches a meaning or a concept, “then perhaps it [writing] actually offers a better insight than speech into the differential status of language itself” (*Of Grammatology* 67). In other words, writing crystalizes the *play* of language, which is that signifiers signify other signifiers by being perennially *différant* from each other (Bennington 196). In short, writing is another name of *différance*.

If writing is *différance*, which is the essence of the sign and the possibility of signification, then writing can rightly denote the science of signs, or what Saussure calls *Semiology*. This sense of writing, as a substitution of semiology, is what Derrida means by *Grammatology*. So he discerns,

Science of “the arbitrariness of the sign,” science of the immotivation of the trace, science of writing before speech and in speech, grammatology would thus cover a vast field within which linguistics would . . . delineate its own area . . .

By a substitution which would be anything but verbal, one may replace *semiology* by *grammatology* in the program of the *Course in General Linguistics*. (*Of Grammatology* 51)

The benefit of this replacement is to show that the lowly and inferior position, in which Saussure and other logocentrists have always repressed writing, proves that writing is at the core of language more than speech is. Derrida contends,

Then one realizes that what was chased off limits, the wandering outcast of linguistics, has indeed never ceased to haunt language as its primary and most intimate possibility. Then something which was never spoken and which is nothing other than writing itself as the origin of language writes itself within Saussure's discourse. (*Of Grammatology* 44)

This means that Saussure's attempt to banish writing, as a mere figuration of speech, out of language and linguistics actually proves that writing is the possibility of language; writing is at the essence of language. It is the possibility of language because language cannot work except through *différance*, and as Derrida puts it, "writing is the other name of this *différance*."

It is very interesting how Derrida shows that his argument *writes itself in Saussure's discourse*. As if what Derrida wants to establish as *grammatology* already writes itself in Saussure's text. The subject of 'writes' is neither Saussure nor Derrida; rather it is writing itself. What I am trying to derive from this passage is that Derrida does not pretend that Saussure's theory is wrong. Interestingly, he claims that Saussure's theory says that writing is not belatedly existent in respect to speech; but rather, that writing is the possibility of speech and of language.

The passage, quoted above, crystalizes the style of Derrida's engagement with Saussure. It is not simply merely an agreement or disagreement; it is irreducible to one

particular orientation; it is not even ironic like his reply to Searle in *Limited Ink*. In my view, it is Derrida's style that *writes* his analysis and critique of Saussure in Saussure's theory.

Perhaps Derrida gives us a better view of this engagement and how his argument writes itself in Saussure's discourse:

What Saussure saw without seeing, knew without being *able* to take into account, following in that the entire metaphysical tradition, is that a certain mode of writing was necessarily but provisionally imposed . . . as instrument and technique of representation of a system of language. And that this movement, unique in style, was so profound that it permitted the thinking, *within language*, of concepts like those of the sign, technique, representation, language . . . Saussure opens the field of a general grammarology. (*Of Grammarology* 43)

Derrida's role, thus, was to enter and discover this field, which Saussure uniquely but unconsciously opened in his *Course*. The key that Saussure gave to Derrida is the movement of the *signifier*, *sign*, *writing* and *language* as a whole. To me, this movement, which Derrida describes as *unique in style*, is what Derrida picked up, analyzed, modified, reformulated and finally coined as *différance*. Derrida says this movement is *unique in style* based on that it is a movement that is not present, not a thing; however, it alone makes meaning. Hence, the style of this movement is what attracts Derrida and gives him a clue to *différance*.

To sum up, Derrida's engagement with Saussure, in *Of Grammatology*, is *unique in style*. He follows Saussure's terms and even his consideration of writing as a signifier of speech, then shows that what Saussure's theory says without uttering, leads to without arriving at, is that writing (i.e., *différance*) is the possibility of language.

After establishing this ontological framework of language and writing, Derrida continues in "Signature Event Context" to develop his conception of writing as iteration of meanings. He shows that writing is capable to subsist without being necessarily attached to a specific addresser, addressee and context. Hence, a written mark proves three absences:

1- The absence of the addressee. The receiver of a written text must be, in a sense, absent-able. That is to say, a written mark should be able to function as being communicable, transmittable, decipherable, in a word, iterable regardless of any particular addressee. "To be what it is, all writing must, therefore, be capable of functioning in the radical absence of every empirically determined receiver in general" (Derrida, *Limited Ink* 8).

2- The absence of the addresser. Derrida argues that once a written text is finished, it works on its own as a machine that functions without its producer's presence. The author might die or forget what he wrote; however, the written mark continues to signify what it signifies throughout the times. Therefore, if one wrote something then forgot why he wrote it, the actual text would still be readable and make meanings. To put it in Derrida's own words, "For a writing to be a writing it must continue to 'act' and to be readable even when what is called the author of the writing no longer answers for what he has written" (*Limited Ink* 8).

3- The absence of the context. Derrida defines a context as “the collectivity of presence organizing the moment of its [a written mark] inscription” (*Limited Ink* 9). Indeed, Derrida’s conception of “context” is a complex one. In addition to the linguistic components of a text, a context includes “a certain ‘present’ of the inscription, the presence of the writer to what he has written, the entire environment and the horizon of his experience, and above all the intention” (*Limited Ink* 9). However, these contextual elements are all momentary. In the course of time, they become beyond the knowledge of the audience and maybe the author as well. For instance, the context of an exam’s written answer is being written by a student, being written under observation, in a limited time, being aimed at being convincing and successful, being written in the morning/afternoon/evening, etc. Nevertheless, after a while, these contextual elements may become forgotten or simply ignored. Moreover, Derrida notes that one always needs to put this (etc) at the end because the context can never be *fully* determinable. If writing marks the absence of the addresser and the addressee, then it automatically also marks the absence of THE context. “A written sign carries with it a force that breaks with its context” (Derrida, *Limited Ink* 9).

It is important to note that Derrida’s absence of context means that the context is never *fully* conceivable. Thus, Derrida shows that among the traits of writing is:

The disqualification or the limiting of the concept of context, whether “real” or “linguistic,” inasmuch as its rigorous theoretical determination as well as its empirical saturation is rendered impossible or insufficient by writing. (*Limited Ink* 9)

That said, a context results from other contexts; a context is an assembly of contexts. For example, the context of *Hamlet* could be its plot, the status of the kingdom of Denmark during the early 17th century, the conflict between Catholicism and Protestantism, or it could be something else. The idea is that one can widen the context or narrow it, as he likes.

The concept of absence, as shown above, leads Derrida to articulate one of the main traits of writing, perhaps the major one, i.e., iteration. Iteration is the capability of a written text to be repeated and altered. If we read an ancient Greek or Latin poem, we would be repeating what every other reader of this poem has read; nonetheless, we may have different/altered understandings of it. This repeatability and alterity of texts are what Derrida refers to as iteration or iterability.

Hence, iterability is at the essence of writing. Nonetheless, Derrida finds that Speech Act theory as explained by J. L. Austin forms an objection to his understanding of iterability. For, Austin differentiates between two main types of utterance 1- constative; 2- performative. The first type is a description of something or it informs us about something, hence it could be true or false. For example, when one says: “the bus is coming,” he describes something (the fact that there is a bus that is coming); this information may be true or false. However, the second type does not inform but acts. It acts as a promise, or an order, or a warning, etc. So, it is not potential for being true or false, for instance, “I promise you to come” (Austin 3-4).

Austin then elaborates that for a performative utterance to produce its illocutionary force (i.e., meaning) successfully, it must have: 1- contextual elements; 2- a signifying intention (although Austin only implicitly makes this second point, as Culler spots in

“Convention and Meaning” 23). The contextual elements are the conventional circumstances in which a speech functions as a performance of an act; and the signifying intention means that the speaker should consciously intend to perform the act of his utterance. The most common example of this is marriage. When the minister in a church says, “I now pronounce you man and wife,” he performs a performative act that requires an intention to make marriage as well as specific contextual elements in order to accomplish the meaning of marriage; e.g., the speaker must be authorized to perform marriage, the two addressees must be a male and a female, they must be unmarried, they must not be insane, etc.

Consequently, Austin claims, “a performative utterance will, for example, be *in a peculiar way* hollow or void if said by an actor on the stage, or if introduced in a poem, or spoken in soliloquy. This applies in a similar manner to any and every utterance. Language in such circumstances is . . . *parasitic* upon its normal use” (22). This means that a citation or an iteration of a performative utterance or any utterance in general would be void of illocutionary force, i.e., meaning, because the contextual elements are not had and/or the intention of the speaker is not serious. Therefore, citation/iteration represents an abnormal (or, in Derrida’s word, anomalous) aspect of language.

Derrida criticizes Austin for banishing citationality out of the realm of speech act as well as for holding the meaning of an utterance to the intention of the speaker. First, Derrida allegorically wonders, “isn’t it true that what Austin excludes as anomaly, exception, “non-serious,” *citation* (on stage, in a poem, or a soliloquy) is the determined modification of a general citationality—or rather, a general iterability—without which there would not even be a “successful” performative?” (*Limited Ink* 17). What this derrida-

style question says is that no performative utterance can be what it is except by being issued in conformity to a conventional model. For a priest to perform a marriage, he must accord his speech to the model of marriage that he was taught; he just repeats a specific speech. This means that repetition, or iteration, or citation is a precondition of any performative utterance.

Second, Derrida claims that Austin's intentionality is teleological. We cannot hold the meaning of an utterance to the intention of its author; otherwise, if the minister says "I was joking" after saying "I now pronounce you . . .," then the bride and groom would be single again; even more ironically, any speech or text that we do not know the intention of its author will be immediately meaningless. Again, Derrida does not deny the existence of intention; but he denies its telos, i.e., having the meaning held to it.

Even more, he seems to derive from Austin's argument what supports his theses of *différance* and iterability; in that, supposing that the intention of the author, among other things, determines the meaning of a text, then the absence of the intention, which is the case of most instances of writing, would entail that the meaning of a text cannot be fully determinable. This is how I understand what I consider as Derrida's final word on intention: "*Différance*, the irreducible absence of intention" (*Limited Ink* 18). The absence of intention, the said governor of meaning, implicates the continuous iterability, the continuous movement of difference and deferral between meanings, which is what *différance* describes.

This last move subtly shows that the Derridian textual meaning is essentially *différant*, it cannot be reduced to a single context, nor to a single intention, nor to a single signifier; rather, it comes from, and only from, the movement (i.e., difference and deferral)

between different contexts, intentions, signifiers, etc. To Derrida, the best manifestation of this *différance* is of course writing because writing is just a piece of paper with some ink on it, in other words, there is no present addresser, no present addressee, no present intention, no present context; therefore, there is an iterability of each of these factors; therefore, there is an iterability of meaning. Iterability of meaning means that it defers and differs from other meanings, just as a signifier defers and differs from other signifiers. So, iterability is *différance* and both represent the condition of meaning.

Another important point that Derrida stresses upon is the “necessity of disengaging from the concept of polysemics what I have elsewhere called *dissemination*, which is also the concept of writing” (*Limited Ink* 9). This puts iterability/ writing/ *différance* /*dissemination* on one side and polysemy on another side. Although Derrida does not overtly explain why *différance* is different from polysemy, we can infer that the concept of “polysemy” has two problems 1- it presumes the existence of monosemy; 2- it is bonded to a hierarchy of meanings. Polysemy has traditionally been regarded as a quality conferred on good, eloquent texts. So, one can point at two texts and say, this one is monosemic but that one is polysemic. Furthermore, polysemy, although it affirms the multiplicity of meanings, does not break with the idea that there is an original meaning and secondary meanings. Denying this traditional conception, Derrida says,

The concept of polysemy thus belongs within the confines of explanation, within the explication or enumeration, in the present, of meaning. It belongs to the attending discourse. Its style is that of the representative surface . . . The difference between discursive polysemy and textual dissemination is precisely difference itself, "an implacable difference."

This difference is of course indispensable to the production of meaning.

(*Dissemination* 351)

This means that, as explanation, polysemy makes one meaning dependent upon another, one represents the other; thus, one would be original and the other would be a supplement; nevertheless, polysemy forgets that the so-called original meaning is framed by an implacable difference that is irreducible to an origin. Hence, we can say that dissemination is polysemy without an original meaning, that is, without a hierarchy of meanings. That is the reason Derrida links or rather equates between dissemination, *différance*, iterability and writing. These concepts do not belong to a particular discourse because they are traits of language itself. In other words, no text, Derrida would claim, can be in-différant or can fail to disseminate.

Derrida concludes his essay defining writing as “a *dissemination* irreducible to *polysemy*. Writing is read; it is not the site . . . of a hermeneutic deciphering, the decoding of a meaning” (*Limited Ink* 21). To me, this very subtle sentence crystalizes Derrida’s theory of writing and thus, of textual meaning. Writing as “*dissemination* irreducible to *polysemy*” means that writing is a multiplicity of meanings without a hierarchical transference from an origin to a supplement, that is, from a signifier to a signified. “Writing is read” breaks, on the one hand, with the idea that the writer encodes the meaning and the reader decodes it, and affirms, on the other hand, that reading a text writes its meaning, just as Derrida wrote his *grammatology* in Saussure’s *Course* (see page 78).

In the above analysis, we saw Derrida's conception of textual meaning as presented in the two sources we discussed. Therefore, if we want to compare this to al-Jurjānī's theory, we should perform this comparison between the idea of *al-naẓm* and *différance*, writing, dissemination, etc. As pointed out in the beginning of this chapter, deconstruction and *al-naẓm* suggest an immediate contradiction between them so, I would like to compare between the two critics' politics of textual meaning to see how each defines "meaning."

I think there is an interesting similarity between *al-naẓm* and *différance*. If *différance* describes the difference and deferral between (among other things) the words of a text, *al-naẓm* also describes the difference and deferral between the words of a text. In its simplest sense, *al-naẓm* is the arrangement of words in a statement, which implicates 1- the choice of which word to put and which word to eliminate, this (which and which) means difference; 2- the ordering of words, making one after/deferred from another. Thus, *al-naẓm* and *différance* describe the process of word order in a text.

This similarity provokes us to look more closely at both terms to see how each answers the question: what is meaning?

al-Naẓm tells us that, on a textual level, there are two meanings: "the origin of meaning" أصل المعنى and "the image of meaning" صورة المعنى. As for the origin of meaning, it is the patent literal meaning of the syntagms (page 31), as for the image of meaning, it happens through the use of tropes, or the richness of the syntactic texture, or both (page 33). It is particularly important here to note that al-Jurjānī describes the image of meaning as an addition to the origin of meaning (*Dalā'il* 266). The transmission from one meaning to another implies for al-Jurjānī that they are systematically constructed, one upon the

other. We can then infer that meaning has a beginning and an addition; a center and different dimensions related to it.

Différance tells us that, on a textual level, there is no origin for meaning, nor is there a hierarchical transmission from one meaning to another, but rather, the meaning of a text is an absolute “*dissemination* irreducible to *polysemy*.” Textual meaning, accordingly, happens by the simultaneous referring and being referred to (i.e., arche-trace, or différance) between the contextual elements, which include in addition to the text, the moment of the inscription, the other texts, the author, the receiver and very importantly the “etc.”

Hence, the first pivotal difference between the two terms lies in the notion of origin, which must be seen in the light of al-Jurjānī’s and Derrida’s different considerations of the relationship between a signified and a signifier as shown above (page 74). This philosophical difference translates itself in their discussions of textual meaning, that is, while al-Jurjānī says there is an origin of meaning and different imagings of it, Derrida says that the origin and the not-origin essentially overlap, intertwine and exchange just as the signifier and the signified.

The second pivotal difference, which is essentially related to the first difference, is in the notion of context. As shown above, the Derridian context exceeds the text itself to the limitlessness of language, which means that the context is bonded to a status of absence, i.e., it never fully becomes present. The absence of context implicates for Derrida that “meaning” cannot *fully* exist, “[M]eaning is context-bound, but context is boundless” (Culler, “Convention and Meaning” 24,) so meaning is boundless. The Jurjanian context, however, is primarily the text itself, that is, its single words, syntactic texture and tropes.

It is important to note that al-Jurjānī does not deny the non-textual context but, as a rhetorician, he is mainly concerned with the text as the locus of meaning. Nevertheless, al-Jurjānī's context is not confined to the mere literal text because tropes exist in the meta-text, that is, things that are not literally mentioned but only figuratively implied. However, the alleged non-presence of tropes is not, I would claim, the same as the absence that Derrida attributes to writing because tropes always rely on a relationship to the literal meaning of the text (we may simplify this relationship by recalling Jakobson's similarity and contiguity). This reliance reduces the absence of the meta-text by detaining it within the denotation of the literal text.¹⁵ Hence, compared to Derrida's context, al-Jurjānī's context is not boundless.

What this entails is that meaning is not boundless for al-Jurjānī; there is no arche-trace nor limitless *play* of meanings, rather, there is a multiplicity of meanings bound by the context, which, to my understanding, Derrida would call *polysemy*. By contrast, the meaning we find in Derrida's theory is "context-bound, but context is boundless." Since the context is boundless, meaning always disseminates in this boundlessness just as in the example of the dictionary mentioned before. It could be argued that this deconstructs the whole notion of meaning, I think this is exactly what Derrida says, but in reference to the *logocentric* meaning. In other words, meaning as a signified of a word or the significance of a text exists but it is always *différant* and never becomes fully determinable until this *différance* ends, which is endless.

¹⁵ For more information about al-Jurjānī's theory of tropes, see: Abū Mūsā, Muḥammad. *Madkhal*; Deeb, K. Abu. *Al-Jurjānī's Theory of Poetic Imagery*.

That said, we can see that the difference between al-Jurjānī and Derrida originates from what they think a meaning is. The differences between the two critics circumbulates around the notion of infinity or limitlessness of meaning. The reason for such a phenomenon, from my point of view, is that a meaning of a word is finite and conventionally static (fixed), for al-Jurjānī, but for Derrida, it is infinite and dynamic, i.e., *différant*. To explain this, al-Jurjānī claims that difference is an emphatic necessity for having words as shown above (page 22) but this does not mean that a word means what it means only by “difference.” To rephrase, when people find a thing that is different from the other things, and so, its mental image (signified) becomes different from all other mental images, they conventionally put a word for this mental image and its thing. This is the process of making a word (conventionally) and it is based on difference, but this is different from the process of using a word. Once a word has been conventionally made, we do not need to go through that process of “differentiation” every time we use it because the word itself stands for its meaning. Whenever the word is said or read, it signifies its meaning without having us to differentiate it from all other words first in order to know its meaning. Therefore, the meaning is not infinitely held in a process of difference.

To use our delicious example again, the word “ ‘Aflaj” did not exist in our dictionary/language until we realized a “difference” between the “thing” we invented and its “mental image” and all other “things” and “mental images,” accordingly, the word “ ‘Aflaj” has been made differently from all other words to mark and signify ‘Aflaj. Since that time, I do not need to go through this process of “difference” again when I use the word “ ‘Aflaj” because it has already been psychologically registered and associated with its meaning. Whenever I read or hear “ ‘Aflaj,” I do not think: this is not the word “pasta,”

not the word “moon,” not the word “the,” etc, so it is the word “ ‘Aflaj.” Rather, the meaning “ ‘Aflaj” attends in the mind without any need to “differ” nor to “defer.”

That said, al-Jurjānī regards the meaning of a word to be finite, specified and conventionally static. Nevertheless, this does not mean that no word can be modified in terms of its meaning until the end of life. This could happen sometimes; but when it happens, the modified meaning would be the same, i.e., finite, specified and conventionally static. For example, the word “noble” used to mean a person from a special social layer in the feudal society, but nowadays, it means a good person regardless of his social position. The old meaning was finite for the old people just as the new meaning is finite for the contemporary people. I do not need to differentiate the word “noble” and its meaning from all other words and meanings in order to know what “noble” means, nor does an 18th century English speaker need to do so.

The above explanation shows that al-Jurjānī regards a word to be a signifier of its meaning, and such a signification is not conditioned by “difference,” but the conventional inception of the word was. Put in other words, the signification of a single word is not an endless process (or, play) of difference and deferral. So, if one asks, why and/or how does “tree” mean tree? I claim that al-Jurjānī would answer: because it was conventionally made to mean tree, so it has been mentally assigned to and associated with the concept of tree. But if one asks, why was “tree” conventionally made to mean tree? I claim that al-Jurjānī would answer: because the “thing” tree was found to be different from the other things (i.e., not sky, not mind, not speed, etc) and its mental image was thus found to be different from all other mental images; therefore, the sound tree, being not used for any word, became conventionally assigned as a word for tree. We can see that in the first answer (the answer

to the question of how a word means,) there is no difference; but in the second answer (the answer to the question about the conventional inception of a word,) difference is there.

Now, we can better understand how and why al-Jurjānī's understanding of textual meaning is different from Derrida's. For al-Jurjānī, the way we conceive of the meaning of a text is to understand the meanings of its single words and the relationships between its arranged words, i.e., *al-naẓm*. These are the two essential steps to interpret a text, we may add the context of its inscription, the context of the author, etc; but these out-of-text contexts may sometimes be missed; however, the text itself must be there. Hence, the meaning of a text, e.g., a poem, happens, at least, via contemplating the text itself, i.e., its single words, syntactic texture and tropes. These three elements represent three categories of meaning that we extracted from al-Jurjānī's theory before, in addition to the meaning of a whole sentence (page 38). The meanings of single words are finite and conventionally static. The meanings of the different syntactic textures and tropes are the rich subjects that al-Jurjānī and other rhetoricians discuss in their works. al-Jurjānī has shown us how eloquence stems from the beautiful use of syntactic textures and tropes, in which meanings become intensified so, a sentence/a text may have multiple meanings. The multiplicity of meanings, however, does not mean dissemination of meanings, in the derridian sense, because syntactic textures and tropes are both grounded on the single words and the single words themselves have finite meanings. Thus, for al-Jurjānī, there is a clear origin from which meanings proliferate and multiply.

Nothing of what we said above in relation to al-Jurjānī would conflict with Derrida's theory except one thing. In other words, Derrida would agree that contemplating a text, i.e., its syntactic texture, tropes and single words allows us to conceive of its

meanings and beauty; he would also agree that tropes and syntactic texture happen via the arrangement of the single words (this is a matter of general agreement). However, Derrida would contend that the single words themselves are bound to a status of *différance*, to which their meanings are also bound. In other words, single words signify nothing without the infinite play, *arche-trace* and *différance*. Consequently, texts signify nothing without *différance*, dissemination and iterability. Hence, the textual meaning is bound to *différance*, that is, the condition whence there is not an origin for the “multiplicity” and “proliferation” of meaning.

To summarize, the multiplicity of meanings is something that both theories affirm, but they differ in their epistemological understanding of the origination and proliferation of meanings. Moreover, both theories agree that meanings develop from a movement of difference and deferral, which al-Jurjānī terms as *al-naẓm* and Derrida terms as *différance*. This movement of meanings is hierarchical and bounded for al-Jurjānī but it is disseminated for Derrida.

Although it falls beyond the framework of this dissertation, we should acknowledge that the intellectual, cultural and, in a sense, theological differences between al-Jurjānī and Derrida very much echo in their different views of the politics of meaning. On the one hand, al-Jurjānī is rooted in the Islamic theology and his theory is devoted for an Islamic purpose that is revealing the miracioulness of the Qur’ān, but on the other hand, Derrida comes from a postmodern philosophical environment and his philosophy is devoted, by and large, to the deconstruction of the logo-centrism of thought and presence. From another perspective, and without being led to reducing, or confining al-Jurjānī’s work in the field of rhetoric nor to confining Derrida’s work in philosophy, (because it is clear that al-

Jurjānī's rhetoric presents different arguments on the philosophy of language and meaning and that Derrida's philosophy widely resonates in rhetoric and literary theory,) it remains true to say that their different academic contexts resulted in radical differences between their treatments of the question of "meaning" in relation to "eloquence" for al-Jurjānī and "metaphysics of presence" for Derrida.

Finally, both theories do not make an account for the meaning beyond the levels of words and sentences. As we turn to the next chapter, we shall investigate Jakobson's discussion of poetic meaning on the level of textual structure.

Chapter 3: Formalist theories of Textual Meaning: Jakobson's parallelism.

As it sounds, formalism tends to focus primarily on form rather than content, it regards content to be dependent on the form (Jefferson, "Russian Formalism" 28). Therefore, formalists are often criticized for isolating literature from its non-textual dimensions. However, a prominent formalist contends that, "What we stand for is not the separatism of art but the autonomy of the aesthetic function" (Jakobson, *Language in Literature* 377). With this succinct statement, Roman Jakobson denies that the formalist study of literature "fails to grasp the relationship of art to real life; [and that] it calls for an 'art for art's sake'" (*Language in Literature* 377). This lets us realize that formalism, at least according to one of its founders, is not in opposition to Marxism or psychoanalysis as two non-textually oriented approaches to the study of literature, rather it just has a different interest from theirs. The formalist interest lies in the "aesthetic function" of literature, whose autonomy and politics we shall investigate to see how such a notion delineates meaning within literary works.

The term "aesthetic function" comes through Jakobson's discussion of the different possible functions that a statement can have. His famous hexapartite outline of the factors and functions of any verbal communication is as follows:

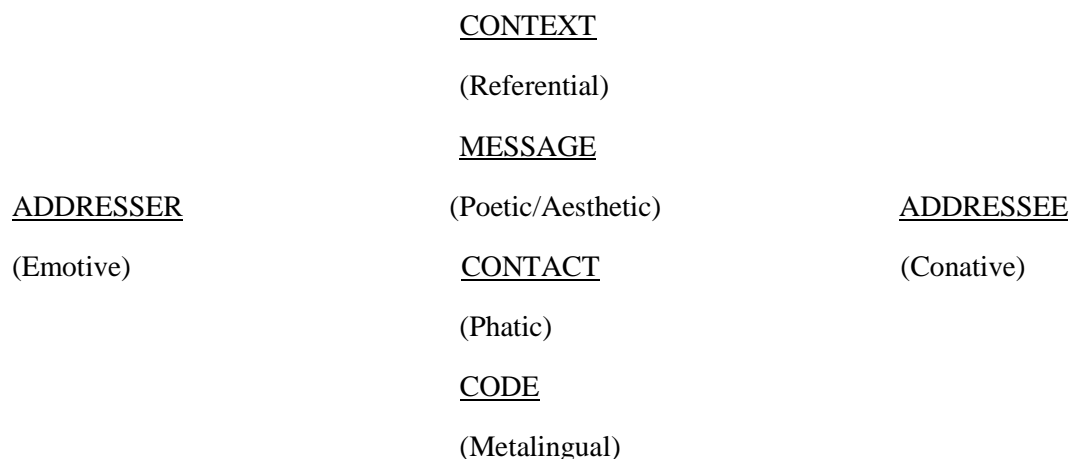


Figure 3.1: Six factors and functions of verbal acts

The *addresser* speaks to the *addressee* and this act of speaking carries a *message*, i.e., words and meanings. This message must refer to a *context* even if this context is not explicitly uttered. Furthermore, both the addresser and the addressee share a certain verbal *code*, i.e., an agreed way of speaking and understanding, or an agreed way of *contact*. For instance, when one person tells another “it is raining,” there becomes a contact between both persons that includes a message, in the English language, concerning something, e.g., weather, umbrella, going out.

Each bracketed adjective in the above diagram describes the dominant function (not the only function) of a statement that is oriented towards a specific factor. This gives us six types of speeches according to the dominant function. One, phatic speech: when the speaker mainly aims at establishing a contact with an addressee, e.g., “do you hear me?” Two, emotive speech: when the speaker mainly aims at expressing his emotions, e.g., “wow, what a dream.” Three, referential speech: in which the speaker stresses on the cognitive or the situational context of the speech, such as “Brazil is the largest country in South America.” Four, conative speech: when the focus is on the addressee such as in

evocative or imperative sentences: “girls, be polite.” Five, metalingual speech: when the language itself (i.e., the code) forms the main purpose of the speech, e.g., “what do you mean by ASAP? I mean as soon as possible.” Six, poetic speech: when the focus is on the speech or the message itself for itself, which is the case of poetry and all types of verbal arts.

Among the six components, “code” and “message” are most important because they correspond or actually replace Saussure’s *langue* and *parole*. Jakobson acknowledges Saussure’s novelty in furnishing a sophisticated approach to the study of linguistics through the binary *langue/parole*; nonetheless, he does not fully agree on the way Saussure defines these terms. He says,

The fundamental dichotomous notions of linguistics, particularly singled out by F. de Saussure . . . called *langue* and *parole* in France . . . now receive a much clearer, simpler, logically less ambiguous, and operationally more productive formulation, when matched with the corresponding concepts of communication theory, namely with ‘code’ and ‘message’. (“Pattern in Linguistics” 224)

So he equates or, rather, replaces *code* with *langue* and *message* with *parole*. In fact, since the early 1950s, Jakobson only used code/message in lieu of *langue/parole* in his different writings (Matejka 175). So, how does Jakobson’s code/message differ from Saussure’s *langue/parole*? The answer to this question would introduce us to the procedure of the poetic function of a speech and let us understand how the artifice of poetry happens according to Jakobson. إن شاء الله تعالى.

The difference between *parole* and “message” is that “message” has a social aspect; it is modulated by the interaction between an addresser and an addressee; however, *parole* is an individual act according to Saussure. So, while Saussure affirms that the “execution [of parole] is never carried out by the collectivity. Execution is always individual, and the individual is always its master” (13), Jakobson asserts that *parole*, or the “message,” is “an interpersonal phenomenon like a wedding ceremony, a duel, or any other reciprocal action. It is an intersubjective phenomenon, and consequently, a social one” (*On Language* 93).

As for the code, it differs from *langue* in that the former includes something that the latter does not include: metalanguage. Jakobson differentiates between “object language” that refers to objects, e.g., “the cat is on the mat,” and “metalanguage” that refers to language itself, e.g., “cat is a four legged mammal that is easily domesticated” (*Language in Literature* 69). In the last example, what comes after ‘is’ is not mentioned for any purpose other than defining the word “cat.” This becomes clearer in the context of foreign language acquisition. When an English teacher says the last sentence to a group of elementary students, he does not introduce the object cat for them, which they already know, but he only introduces the English word of this object.

However, metalanguage has other more complex applications, namely metaphor and metonymy. These are two types of metalanguage that concern us in our discussion of the poetic function of speech.

In metaphor, the speaker does not speak about an object; rather, he speaks about the word(s), to which his metaphor refers. For instance, “I saw a lion in the battlefield,” the word “lion” is a metaphor/metalanguage for “brave warrior,” but “brave warrior” itself is

not an example of metalanguage; rather, it is an example of object language that refers to a real object, i.e., a human being. Thus, metaphor is a type of metalanguage that speaks of language that speaks of objects. Jakobson explains, “[S]imilarity in meaning connects the symbols of a metalanguage with the symbols of the language referred to. Similarity connects a metaphorical term with the term for which it is substituted” (*Language in Literature* 113). The second sentence illuminates the first. Both “symbols of a metalanguage” and “metaphorical term” mean a metaphor such as “lion” in the last example. Hence, the similarity between the actual warrior and the actual lion links between the symbol/term “warrior” and the symbol/term “lion.”

Metonymy also works like metaphor but it is based on contiguity instead of similarity. If one says in the state of South Carolina, “I know a red neck” to imply that he knows a farmer, the word “red neck” here forms a metonymic instance of metalanguage because it does not refer to the actual object of a neck, rather, it speaks about a farmer. The reason for this deviation from the original use of the word “red neck” is that since the most distinctive part of a South Carolinian farmer is his red neck (due to the hot sun there), we can generalize “red neck” to mean the whole object of the farmer. So, the contiguity between the part and the whole justifies using the former in lieu of the latter.

These two instances of metalanguage, i.e., metaphor and metonymy do not fit in Saussure’s *langue* because 1- in them, words are assigned for signifieds that are different from the signifieds to which words are assigned in the normal use of language; 2- the relationship between the words and their meanings is not arbitrary, rather, it is motivated by similarity or contiguity. Thus, Jakobson’s code subsumes Saussure’s *langue* and, in addition, metalanguage.

That said, the code may consist of three things: object language, metaphor and metonymy. The first constituent is the normal use of language, the second is metalanguage based on similarity and the third is metalanguage based on contiguity. A speaker formulates a message by selecting his words from the object language and perhaps also from metalanguage then by combining these words into a sequence, i.e., a speech or a text. Hence, Jakobson says that the formation of a sentence or a discourse includes two modes, i.e., selection and combination:

The two basic modes of arrangement used in verbal behavior, *selection* and *combination* . . . If “child” is the topic of the message, the speaker selects one among the extant, more or less similar nouns like child, kid, youngster, tot, all of them equivalent in a certain respect, and then, to comment on this topic, he may select one of the semantically cognate verbs—sleeps, dozes, nods, naps. Both chosen words combine in the speech chain. The selection is produced on the basis of equivalence, similarity and dissimilarity, synonymy and antonymy, while the combination, the build-up of the sequence, is based on contiguity.

(Language in Literature 71)

The “selection” is then the choosing of words and the “combination” is the sequencing of them; both together represent the “arrangement” of any verbal act. In the selection process, elements of language and metalanguage function as raw materials that are related to each other on the basis of equivalence. It is important to understand “equivalence” not only as two words similar to each other in meaning, e.g., house and home, but generally as two words related to each other even if their meanings are different. The equivalence between

words is thus an elastic criterion that includes similarity, dissimilarity, synonymy and antonymy (Fry 115-16). Thus, cat/dog, white/black, day/may and she/you are all examples of equivalent words. That said, equivalence is not confined to meaning; two words may be equivalent in sounds, or in their morphological classification, etc.

After selecting the words, they need to be syntactically combined together on the basis of contiguity. “Contiguity” here describes the syntactic ordering of words in a sentence so they become contiguous to each other. Thus, contiguity describes two different things in Jakobson’s nomenclature 1- the basis of word order; 2- the basis of metonymy. Despite the difference between both types of contiguity, one being verbal and the other being non-verbal, there seems to be an intrinsic connection between them in that the syntactically ordered words same as the components of a metonymy complement each other. For example, the red neck and the body complement each other, and also a subject and a predicate complement each other. So, both contiguities involve complementation.

From the selection and the combination, a message emerges. This message may have a referential function, or a poetic function, or a conative function, etc. Here, Jakobson enquires about the distinctive feature of the arrangement of messages that have a poetic function, “What is the empirical linguistic criterion of the poetic function? In particular, what is the indispensable feature inherent in any piece of poetry? . . . *The poetic function projects the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection into the axis of combination*” (*Language in Literature* 71).

We saw above that the principle of equivalence, which governs the process of selection, includes both similarity and contrast, either on object language level or on metalanguage level; now, in the above famous quote, Jakobson wants to apply this

understanding of “equivalence” to the combination of words in the actual speech. This implies that “equivalence” would have to be carried out in the different elements of the speech, including grammar, morphology, phonetics, prosody—in short, the general structuration of the speech. Hence, in order to have a poetic function (or, literariness) in a message, we must have equivalence both in the axis of selection and in the axis of combination. A *simple sample* is the old political slogan “I like Ike,” which is made of equivalent sounds (ay layk ayk) to influence the audience by its impressiveness (*Language in Literature* 70). So, the combination that is based on equivalence appears via the repetition of sounds (e.g., I like Ike), words (e.g., “If” in Rudyard Kipling’s *If* poem), rhymes, grammatical devices (e.g., modal verbs or modifiers), etc. These repetitions become intended for themselves in artistic discourses because they engender aesthetic effects that astonish and entertain the audience (Jakobson, *Questions* 491, cited in Robey 52). This application of the principle of equivalence in the process of combination is the indispensable feature and the empirical linguistic criterion of any poetic speech.

We may thus infer that the poetic function, which makes a verbal act as a verbal art, is a product of word-combination based on a repetition of equivalences. This is what Jakobson terms “parallelism” and defines as,

Equivalent entities confront one another by appearing in equivalent positions. Any form of parallelism is an apportionment of invariants and variables. The stricter the distribution of the former, the greater the discernibility and effectiveness of the variations. (*Language in Literature* 173)

The “equivalent entities” refers to the equivalence between sounds, grammatical devices, tropes, etc. The “equivalent positions” describes the locations in which the parallelistic sounds, words, grammatical devices, metaphors, etcetera, are distributed, for example, the end of each poetic line where the rhyme appears. The key word in the last quote is “apportionment” because it explains the process of parallelism; it is a *proportional* distribution of equivalent entities whence they become “juxtaposed according to the principle of similarity or contrast. Parallelism thus conceived creates [proportionate] variations amid the invariant” (Pomorska 6). Hence, we can consider the idea of “proportion” as the core of parallelism, which is the core of the arrangement of literary speeches, which distinguishes them from non-literary speeches in Jakobson’s formalism.

Parallelism thus embodies the superimposition of similarity (or, more precisely, equivalence) over contiguity in the arrangement of verbal arts especially poetry, which Jakobson regards as the peak of verbal art and of parallelism. In fact, he notes that parallelism is indispensable in poetry, where “the verse itself . . . dictates the structure of parallelism;” the prosodic structure and the repetition of the lines “determine the parallel distribution of elements of grammatical and lexical semantics,” but parallelism is relatively less common in prose where “semantic units differing in extent play the primary role in organizing parallel structures” (*Dialogues* 106-7).

If we look at figure 3.2, which displays the most frequently contiguous words to “parallelism” in Jakobson’s *Language in Literature*, we can see that “poetry” and its related words such as “lines,” “verse,” “songs,” and “hemistiches” dominate the context of parallelism, which implies that in discussing such a topic, Jakobson mostly focuses on poetry rather than prose. The four nationalities of Russian, Finnish, Chinese and Hebrew

are four examples of world poetry that Jakobson affirms being notably rich in pervasive parallelism. However, the more important key word in this diagram is “grammatical,” which describes the main laboratory of parallelism. In two programmatic essays, namely “Poetry of Grammar and Grammar of Poetry” and “Grammatical Parallelism and its Russian facets,” Jakobson argues that the intricate distribution of grammatical devices such as pronouns and conjunctions and grammatical concepts such as active voice, passive voice, negation, and definiteness begets complex significance and meaningfulness in poetry, especially when there are no tropes involved. In analyzing such phenomenon, and in analyzing verbal art in general, Jakobson excessively leans on linguistics as the main path that leads to recognizing the different usages of grammatical contrivances and their semantic loads (Pomorska 1-2). Hence, grammar forms a major aspect of poetic parallelism and it monopolizes the beauty and the poeticity in imageless poems, as shown later below.

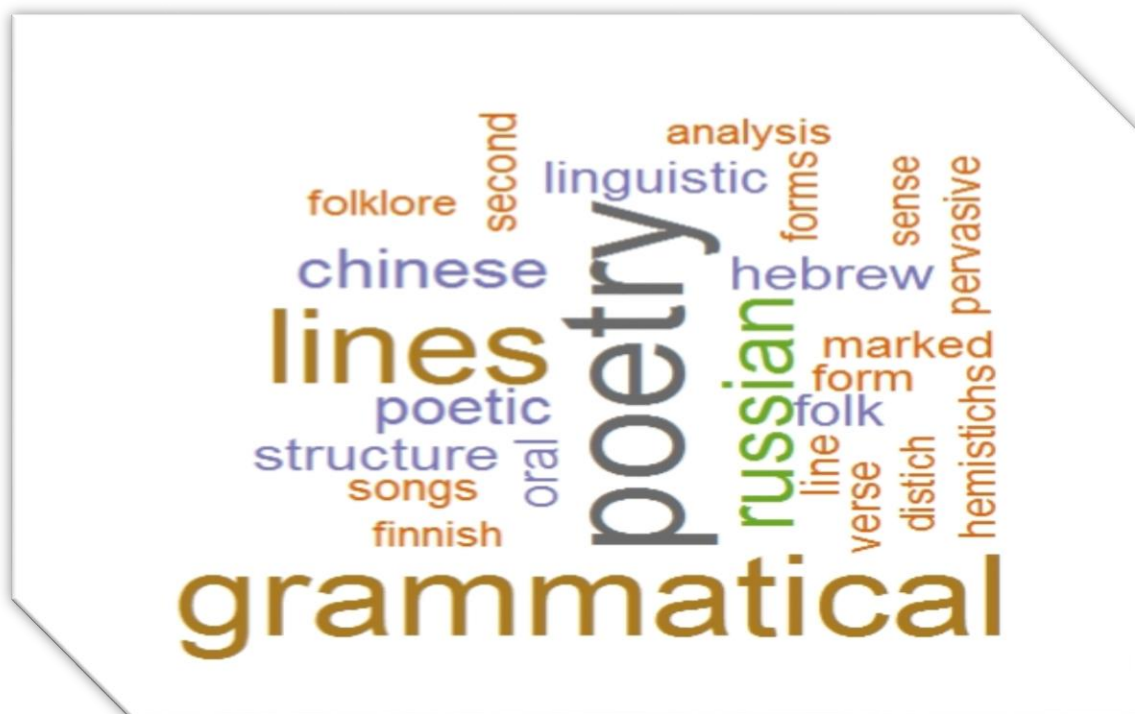


Figure 3.2: Top 25 most frequent terms within 10 key-word-context of “parallelism” in Jakobson’s Language in Literature

The complex significance and meaningfulness that the interaction between the grammatical contrivances in a poem begets is what Jakobson sometimes refers to as “linguistic fictions”: something that operates in the unconsciousness, affects the audience and enthralls his psyche (see, *Language in Literature* 123; Caton 243).

“Linguistic fictions” is a term that Jakobson borrows from Jeremy Bentham’s theory of fictions. He employs such a term to describe the ideational ground beneath the grammatical meanings such as active voice, passive voice, past tense, present tense, etc. By “ideational ground” I mean the fact that grammatical meanings describe the relations between the things expressed in language. To explain, if we say: cat, balcony and snow as separate words, we do not make any relational meanings; however, when we link these words through grammatical meanings such as valency and predication, e.g., “a cat jumped from the balcony in the snow,” we produce a mental sequence of meanings that inform us about the relationships between these things in the real (extra-linguistic) world. This is the ideational ground, (or, to use Bentham’s language, “inferential” ground) beneath that sentence. This ideational ground, being indispensably dependent on relationships, is what “linguistic fictions” implies (Ogden cxi, 13-15; Seiler 121). However, Jakobson indicates that one may question the accuracy of the usage of the term “linguistic fictions” in relation to referential speeches, such as the last example, because their cognitive value is real not fictitious. But he affirms that “in fiction, in verbal art, linguistic fictions are fully realized . . . There where the poetic function dominates over the strictly cognitive function, the latter is more or less dimmed” (*Language in Literature* 124). This implies that the concept of “linguistic fictions” may not be fully applicable to the cat example because it is a referential speech that describes real events and real relationships; however, verbal arts are by and

large based on pure fiction so “linguistic fictions” accurately applies to the ideational ground of poetry and verbal art in general.

It seems that Jakobson uses this concept, “linguistic fictions,” to affirm that fiction is not only metaphor and metonymy; rather, grammar also forms (relational) fictions and eloquence. This can be clearly seen in his analysis of Puškin’s poem below.

As a general rule, Jakobson remarks that formal parallelism, whether grammatical or acoustical, generates semantic parallelism in any text, particularly in poetry where “the internal nexus between sound and meaning changes from latent into patent and manifests itself most palpably and intensely” (*Language in Literature* 87).¹⁶ This is because the apportionment of parallelism implicates that there is a non-arbitrary arrangement, that is, a motivated arrangement of a text. This motivatedness suggests that there is an aptness between the arrangement of a text and the feelings or the ideas that motivate the author to compose it, even if he is unconscious of this aptness. Hence, the critic should analyze the parallelistic arrangement of a text to discover its semantic shadows. In other words, the critic must observe the grammatical and acoustical parallelisms and regard them as a point of departure to discover the significance and the poeticity beyond the coactions and the multifarious affinities between the different parts of a text, e.g., strophes and lines. This is what Jakobson practically shows in his different multi-literary studies.

One of the essential steps in Jakobson’s poetic analyses is to figure out the strophic division of a poem, and in doing so; he regards parallelism as a guide. For instance, in his analysis of a Russian folk poem, he finds that the first 11 lines have 10 infinitives and 1

¹⁶ See also, *Language in Literature* 81, 83, 150, 153, 194, 434.

finite verb; by contrast, the other 9 lines of the poem have 9 finite verbs and no infinitives at all. This observation gives Jakobson a primary indication that the first 11 lines form one strophe and the rest form another strophe (*Language in Literature* 161-62).

Hence, the conception Jakobson has about the form of a poem is that it consists of strophes and each strophe consists of lines. In this respect, he shows that the strophes of a poem always share binary correspondences; for example, if a poem has four strophes, there would usually be grammatical correspondences between each couple of them just as the correspondence between a sequence of AABB, or ABAB or ABBA. To quote Jakobson “in a poem with four stanzas, these [grammatical] figures may distinguish the first two stanzas from the last two, or the odd ones from the even, or finally the exterior two from the interior pair” (*Dialogues* 118).

For the purpose of our critical comparison, I would like to focus on the third strophic pattern, i.e., ABBA, which Jakobson refers to as *chiasmus* or *chiastic pattern* (*Language in Literature* 229, 258, 485) but only fleetingly discusses. There seems to be a focused discussion of this formal pattern in his Czech essay on the Hussite battle song “KotKtoz jsu bozi bojovnici;” however, he gives us an abstract of his findings in another essay as follows,

Its three strophes in turn display a trinitarian form: they are divided into three smaller strophic units—*membra* . . . The initial and the final *membra* of the song are linked together with its central *membrum* (the second *membrum* of the second strophe) and differ from the rest of the *membra* by special features, enabling us to connect these three *membra* through a “falling diagonal,” in contradistinction to the “rising diagonal” linking the

central *membrum* of the song with the final *membrum* of the initial strophe and with the initial *membrum* of the final strophe. (*Language in Literature* 134)

This abstract shows that the very beginning and the very end of the song are linked to its exact center (falling diagonal) and that the end of the first strophe and the beginning of the last strophe are mutually liaised through the middle of the second strophe (rising diagonal). The following visualization may clarify this point:

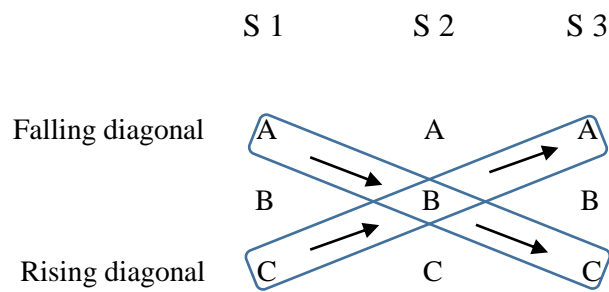


Figure 3.3: Visualization of the song's structure

The details of these falling and rising diagonals should be explained in the original Czech essay; however, this at least lets us know that the structure of this Czech song is circular or chiastic and that it involves interactions between the beginning, the middle and the end.

Another discussion of this pattern can be found in Jakobson's essay on Shakespeare's sonnet 129:

1. The expence of spirit in a waste of shame
2. Is lust in action ; and till action, lust
3. Is perjur'd, murderous, bloody, full of blame.
4. Savage, extreme, rude, cruel, not to trust;

1. Enjoy'd no sooner, but despised straight;
2. Past reason hunted; and no sooner had,
3. Past reason hated, as a swallow'd bait,
4. On purpose laid to make the taker mad;
1. Mad in pursuit, and in possession so;
2. Had, having, and in quest to have, extreme;
3. A bliss in proof,—and prov'd, a very woe;
4. Before, a joy propos'd; behind, a dream;
1. All this the world well knows; yet none knows well
2. To shun the heaven that leads men to this hell. (*The Poems of Shakespeare* 217-18)

Jakobson shows that this sonnet consists of four strophes (three quatrains and a final couplet) which have different interrelationships. Among these relations, the two inner strophes are mutually linked by repeating the word “mad” at the end of the former strophe and at the beginning of the following one. The same two strophes are prominently marked by a salient use of participles, while they do not have any conjugated verbs. Furthermore, both strophes have another parallelism in the distribution of “had” and “mad” as two rhymes in strophe 2 and as two beginnings of lines in strophe 3. As for the outer strophes, i.e., 1 and 4, they share certain distinctive features as well. While they have no participles, each one has one finite that occurs twice in two coordinate clauses linked by a conjunction, i.e., “the expence . . . is lust . . . and . . . lust is perjur'd” in the first strophe, and “the world well knows yet none knows well” in the fourth strophe. In addition, both strophes share a metathesis, i.e., (is lust in action—till action lust is) in the first strophe, and (well knows—

knows well) in the last couplet (*Language in Literature* 208-9). This analysis shows how grammatical features make the outer strophes similar to each other and distinct from the inner strophes that are in turn similar to each other. Hence, the structure of this poem is ABBA.

Nevertheless, Jakobson leaves the case without explaining “what the poetic signification of some of these formal oppositions would be” (Caton 245). In general, the meaningfulness of parallelism is something that Jakobson points out more than he analyzes.

However, Mary Douglas, a modern anthropologist, has further discussed Jakobson’s idea of parallelism, specifically chiasmic parallelism and innovatively developed a rationalization of the meaningfulness beyond such a formal pattern in her book *Thinking in Circles: an Essay on Ring Composition*. This title well extracts the author’s main argument: our thinking, presented in literature, is very much structured in the shape of a circle or a ring, thus ring composition. Through a structural analysis of different texts, the author argues that chiasmus, or converted parallelism, is a prominent literary pattern throughout the ages and cultures (although she does not think this is true for post-modern cultures, p. 146).

According to Douglas, a ring composition is a text that consists of three parts: a beginning, a middle and an epilogue. The last part thematically and verbally echoes the first one in a converted parallelism, or chiasmus. Furthermore, the center of the text is always significant, it subtly links up with the beginning and the end and carries the main message of the whole text. Thus, “When the whole poem or book is gathered together in the middle, and referred to again at the end, the result is a well-integrated composition”

(Douglas 34). Such a composition, she explains, has seven components/techniques (36-38):

1. *Exposition*. The beginning introduces the main theme or topic of the text, calls forth the central load and is echoed again in the last part of the text. It should provoke the audience's excitement by being enigmatic and telling of "a dilemma that has to be faced, a command to be obeyed, or a doubt to be allayed" (36).
2. *Two halves*. The text needs to be thematically, not mechanically, structured in two halves. The last half should invert the first one either verbally or thematically. For example, if the first half is rich in negations, the second half would be rich in affirmation.
3. *Parallel sections*. For example, a poem would consist of pride, praise, war, praise and pride.
4. *Indication of each section*. The composer should "make clear to the reader or listener where one section stops and the next begins. Otherwise the pattern fades out" (36). This indication can be a repetition of a refrain, e.g. *if* or *and*.
5. *Central load*. The center of a ring composition carries its main idea. Moreover, it thematically echoes the beginning and provokes the end. Again, this center needs not be the exact middle line of a text.
6. *Rings within rings*. Each half, or each section, may itself form a ring composition, rendering the text with a microcosm - macrocosm relationship.
7. *Closure*. The end of the text concludes its general meaning and ties up with the beginning thematically and verbally.

These conventions embody a typical construction of a ring composition according to Douglas; however, more important than these conventions is the question: what is the idea beyond such a careful composition? In her answer, Douglas leans on Jakobson's general conception of parallelism as a steady system of correspondences that analogizes the way in which the brain works. She explains,

Jakobson's idea [of parallelism] implies an aesthetic theory about the satisfaction derived from the brain making images of itself at work and duplicating its own structure and activity. The brain works by building correspondences and recognizing them. Jakobson was writing as a linguist about this mental process of dividing and matching. His materials for studying analogy were necessarily verbal; his examples came from poetry, words, rhythms, and sounds . . . Making divisions and seeing similarities, matching parts, like to like – this is the essence of creativity. (72)

The brain works by making parallelisms. No other explanation is needed. (99)

This means that there is a similarity between the textual parallelism and the mental parallelism, which the brain makes between things in the world. Such a similarity makes the receiver of a poem enjoys its verbal construction (in addition to the meaning) even without knowing the reason for this enjoyment. This applies *a fortiori* to the chiasmic parallelism (or, ring composition) because of its more meticulous correspondences and parallelisms.

In addition, Douglas emphasizes that parallelism does not limit the meaning; rather, it dilates it. She says, “I am more concerned to emphasize ring composition’s exegetical function. It controls meaning, it restricts what is said, and in doing so it expands meanings along channels it has dug” (13). This means that the more parallelisms a text includes, the richer and more expandable its meanings become.

This understanding of the meaning of parallelism benefits us to understand the reason why Jakobson presents parallelism as the most important aspect of the poetic function, or in other words, what makes a speech as a poetic speech. Moreover, the mental and the exegetical dimensions of parallelism that Douglas explains form and lie at the core of the aesthetic value of literary texts, or what Jakobson terms “poeticity” or the “poetic effect.”

Before we attempt to compare or contrast Jakobson’s formalism to al-Jurjānī’s *al-naẓm* and al-Qarṭājannī’s *al-tanāsub*, let us deepen our reading of the notion of “poeticity” and ask how it tells us about Jakobson’s conception of meaning.

Poeticity or poetic effect is the philosophical core of Jakobson’s theory. It names the literary quality of a text and is located, strictly speaking, in the “form.” In this respect, Jakobson leans on former critical accounts by Sapir and Whorf, who believed that “form” itself affects thought and perception (Caton 242). This means that form is a self-valued province that attains effectiveness and significance by and for itself. This significance and effectiveness are what Jakobson calls: poeticity. Such poeticity reveals itself in the semiotics of the form, and this is where “meaning” arrives in Jakobson’s theory. Indeed,

he does not deny the lexical meanings nor the figurative meanings of texts, but he affirms that when they combine and become energized by the textual relationships and the interactions between parts and wholes they form another grand meaning, i.e., poeticity. So, poeticity can be understood as the ultimate meaning that results from the relationships and interactions between other meanings. The importance of this meaning, as Douglas tells us, is that it intrinsically satisfies and attracts the brain, and expands and enriches the different lexical and figurative meanings of the text. بسم الله

It is important to note that Jakobson does not deny that there are other non-formalistic meanings in literary texts, such as historical or political meanings; however, he denies that any of these meanings are THE constitutive principle of the poetic effect. Why? Well, this seems to be an essential consequence of the autonomy and domination of the poetic/aesthetic function over the other five functions in literary texts. Jakobson particularly mentions that the referential function is dimmed in literature, so the context of the message becomes ambiguous, though not absent; consequently, the meaning of a literary text is transferred from the domain of reality, society, history or whatever non-textual horizons to the domain of language, to the text, to the form itself. Another consequence of the domination of the poetic function is the split between verbal art and communication. Communication is based on an addresser-addressee relationship, that is, delivering information from one to another, but poetry is an autonomous instance of language in which the addresser and the addressee are not particularly important elements of its significance. Hence, the constitutive principle of the poetic effect lies within the message itself. In short,

Poeticity is present when the word is felt as a word and not a mere representation of the object being named or an outburst of emotion, when words and their composition, their meaning, their external and inner form, acquire a weight and value of their own instead of referring indifferently to reality. (*Language in Literature* 378)

So, Jakobson alienates the common understanding of meaning (as an expression of reality) from his theory, and instead argues that the meaning of verbal art, i.e., poeticity, attends via sensing the formal elements and the reciprocal relations within a text. This means that the meaning Jakobson theorizes stems from the form: a meaning of a network of parallelistic grammatical, acoustical, lexical—“in short, any constituents of the verbal code” (*Language in Literature* 434). The sensing of this network is a mental process of observing correspondences and contrasts, something to which humans are innately attracted and enjoy. This aesthetic operation may be ineffable to an ordinary reader, but the critic should explain it by analyzing the form and the parallelism of the text, which Jakobson does in several essays.

The feeling idea expressed in the last quote is crucial in Jakobson’s theory of meaning because, in analyzing a text and explaining its meaningfulness, he mainly relies on intuition and sense as the agent of investigating the poetic effects (*Language in Literature* 261).

Poeticity thus represents the ultimate meaning of literary texts in Jakobson’s formalism. Such a “meaning” does not function to inform of social nor historical nor ethical meanings but to autonomously impress the thought and entertain the ego. Poetic meaning

thus conceived could be imagined as an aspect of the form, inseparable from it but separable (not separated) from what is outside of it.

The meaning Jakobson theorizes is thus limited in the formal frontiers of the text, but it is not limited to the mere lexical nor the mere metaphorical meanings. His “meaning” is essentially about the aesthetic effect of literary texts; the more one deepens his reading of the form, the more aesthetics one can discover. It goes without saying that the author himself may be totally unaware of such aesthetics that the text bears.

Interestingly, in Jakobson’s theory, certain concepts present translations of some of the focal concepts that al-Jurjānī uses in his theory. These are: arrangement = *al-naẓm* النظم, grammar = *al-naḥw* النحو, and grammatical meanings = *ma‘ānī al-naḥw* معاني النحو. Such a phenomenon provokes us to ask how similarly or differently each critic handles these concepts.

In the first chapter, we saw that al-Jurjānī uses *al-naẓm* (arrangement) to imply the process of assigning positions for words, or the concepts beneath the words, in a speech or a text according to the meanings of grammar, which results in expressiveness and intensity of meanings, i.e., eloquence. Hence, studying *al-naẓm* is what al-Jurjānī argues to be the main path to answering the question of eloquence. Similarly, Jakobson says that the arrangement of the formal constituents of a text such as sounds and grammatical devices produces relationships and interactions, which in turn engender relational semiotics and poeticity. Therefore, studying the arrangement of the form is what Jakobson argues to be the main path to answering the question of poeticity. Hence, the concept “arrangement” is

employed by each critic to imply the process of selecting and combining words in a text, and it forms the major mine of eloquence and poeticity.

The foundation upon which each critic bases his approach to “arrangement” is “grammatical meanings.” al-Jurjānī understands grammatical meanings, actually he uses “meanings of grammar,” to be the relationships through which meanings relate to one another such as valency, predication, and objectness, and he uses this concept to define his major term *al-naẓm* as “the observance of the meanings of grammar in the meanings of speech” (see page 29). Then he shows that *al-naẓm* formulates the eloquence of a text. Thus, *eloquence is based on arrangement, which is based on relationships, which is based on grammatical meanings*. Similarly, Jakobson articulates, “For the figurative arts geometrical principles represent a ‘beautiful necessity,’ . . . It is the same necessity that in language marks out the grammatical meanings” (*Language in Literature* 133). This means that grammatical meanings are for verbal arts as geometric principles are for figurative arts. The geometric principles systematize the interplay of bodies in “the pictorial world of particular objects;” hence, we can infer that grammatical meanings systematize the interplay of words, or the concepts beneath the words in a text. Such a systematization becomes intended for itself, becomes termed as “parallelism” and produces poeticity in poetic texts. Thus, *poeticity is based on arrangement, which is based on parallelism, which is based on relationships, which is based on grammatical meanings*. To sum up, “grammatical meanings” are the basis of relationships, which are the core of *al-naẓm*, arrangement, which is the core of both al-Jurjānī’s eloquence and Jakobson’s poeticity.

Another point where both critics have similar opinions is the idea that the grammatical arrangement of a text may monopolize its eloquence or poeticity when there

are no tropes involved (Abd al-Qādir). For, al-Jurjānī discusses the richness of syntactic texture as one of the sources of eloquence, which can be the only source if there are no figurative meanings in the text (*Dalā'il* 99). Jakobson also claims, “As a rule, in imageless poems it is the ‘figure of grammar’ which dominates and which supplants the tropes” (*Language in Literature* 128).

As an example of the grammatical devices’ monopoly of the production of the poetic effect, Jakobson analyzes a love poem by the Russian poet Puškin, whose grammatical texture “is so distinct that it hardly needs a detailed semantic commentary” (*Language in Literature* 132). This poem has 8 lines, as follows:

- 1 I loved you: love has not yet, it may be,
- 2 Died out completely in my soul;
- 3 But let it not trouble you any more;
- 4 I do not wish to sadden you in any way.

- 5 I loved you silently, hopelessly,
- 6 Tormented now by shyness, now by jealousy;
- 7 I loved you so truly, so tenderly
- 8 As God grant you to be loved by another. (quoted in Jakobson, *Language in Literature* 129)

Jakobson shows that this poem consists of four couplets, which are all, except the second, marked by the reiterated sentence “I loved you,” in turn, each two consequent couplets form a quatrain. The repetition of this refrain, i.e., “I loved you,” attracts Jakobson’s attention towards the order of its three words and their relationships to the meaning of the

poem. Regarding the interplay of the pronouns “I” and “you,” he notes that the first person pronoun is repeated four times in the beginning of four different lines, i.e., 1, 4, 5 and 7. In every instance, “I” is combined with “you” via the verb “loved;” however, the second person pronoun “you” comes two times separated from “I” and instead combined with another agent as in line 3 or another pronoun as in line 8. This subtly indicates the sincerity of the poet’s “I” in his love on the one hand, and the insincerity of the beloved’s “you” in her love on the other. As if the pronouns of the poet and heroine reflect their attitudes towards each other. This sense appears again by contemplating the only other pronoun in the poem, i.e., “another,” which comes at the very end of the poem as opposed to the poet’s “I” at the very beginning.

Another grammatical contrast appears between the couplets of the second quatrain where “for the first time there is a genuine contrast between the two moments of the dramatic development” (*Language in Literature* 131), in that, each couplet contains a passive voice with an instrumental: “tormented by shyness, by jealousy” and “be loved by another.” Such a grammatical parallelism emits more light on the semantic contradistinction between “tormented” and “loved,” and it also marks out the causality between “shyness - jealousy” and “another.” This signifies the frustration of the past neglected lover (i.e., the poet) as opposed to the happiness of the new blessed lover. Finally, Jakobson notes that throughout the poem there are no adjectives at all nor are there any tropes except a seeming metaphor of the death of love in the second line, which is “merely a dead lexicalized metaphor” (*Language in Literature* 129).

In this analysis, Jakobson demonstrates how the arrangement of this poem elucidates its meaning via grammatical parallelisms and so increases the significance of

the poem without any figurative aid. Hence, this poem forms a prominent example of what he refers to as “linguistic fictions,” that is the grammatically made relational fictions of a text (such as the relation between the two lovers,) which supplants the metaphorical significance in imageless poems.

Jakobson’s point here is similar to al-Jurjānī’s analysis of the two lines discussed in the first chapter,

قوم إذا حاربوا ضرروا عدوهم أو حاولوا النفع في أشياعهم نفعوا

Such people, if they fight, they would harm their enemy, or if they try to benefit their allies, they would benefit them.

سجية تلك منهم غير محدثة إن الخلائق فاعلم شرها البدع (Dalā’il 94)

This is their nature; it is not fabricated. Indeed, the worst characteristics, be aware, are the fabricated ones.

whose eloquence was shown to result only from their grammatical formation because they do not include any tropes. We can then say that Jakobson’s analysis and al-Jurjānī’s analysis are similar to each other in terms of ascribing the eloquence/poeticity of the text to its grammatical arrangement, to the textual relationships.

However, al-Jurjānī and Jakobson differ in terms of the frameworks in which they conduct their analyses: for, al-Jurjānī uses the notion of “grammar” to approach the eloquence of single sentences/lines, but Jakobson uses it to approach the poeticity of a whole text. In this respect, Jakobson is similar to al-Qarṭājannī, who discusses the eloquence of a whole poem and argues that the structure of the passages and their lines

must be appropriate and proportionate in order to achieve goodness and eloquence in the poem. That said, we should ask how differently or similarly al-Qarṭājannī's theory and Jakobson's theory discuss the eloquence/poeticity of a whole composition, and more importantly, how this represents each critic's conception of "meaning."

Jakobson's idea of parallelism bears prominent similarity to al-Qarṭājannī's idea of *al-tanāsub*, appropriateness. Both ideas describe the art of arrangement and the artifice of poetry. On the one hand, Jakobson defines parallelism as "equivalent entities confront one another by appearing in equivalent positions" (*Language in Literature* 173), so we have "entities" and "positions," and on the other hand, al-Qarṭājannī defines *al-tanāsub* as the proportionate positioning of words, lines and passages in a way that makes a poem more appealing to the psyche (see page 48). Hence, both parallelism and *al-tanāsub* are about the proportionate positioning of the different components in a text.

Furthermore, *al-tanāsub* and parallelism are similar in terms of their techniques: dividing a poem into units (i.e., *fusūl*, or strophes), focusing on the liaisons between the different lines and strophes, focusing on the beginnings and the ends of each strophe and of the poem, and how they interact together. Thus, both approaches address similar issues, lead and look for similar poetic structures, and appreciate similar textual qualities.

The comparison between *al-tanāsub* and parallelism becomes more palpable when it comes to the chiasmic structure. This formal style is particularly relevant to the analogy al-Qarṭājannī makes between the beginning and the end of a poem and of each passage in a poem on the one hand, and the head marking and fetlocks marking of a horse on the other, i.e., *al-taswīm* and *al-tahjīl*. To me, these two terms correspond to the two (A)s of the ABBA formal pattern that Jakobson mentions. In that, when al-Qarṭājannī articulates that

the beginning of a passage should hint at its motif and the end should elegantly wrap it up in a wise statement or gnomic phrase, he means that the beginning and the end become both general like an introduction and a conclusion (integrative meanings) and that the middle becomes loaded with the different molecular meanings of the motif. Thus, the sequence of the passage would be general – specific – general (g s g) or (a b a). Similarly, the poem as a whole should start with what subtly hints at its main theme such as praise or pride, and end with a beautiful summation of the overall theme, and the other motifs should be distributed between the beginning and the end. Thus, the sequence is again general – specific – general (g s g) or (a b a). This distribution of motifs results in a chiastic poem in which the passages are arranged in an ABBA structure and the motifs inside the individual passages are also arranged in a similar structure, which Douglas describes as having rings within rings, that is, making a section of a ring composition as a ring composition.

In point of fact, there are many similarities between the rules Douglas mentions for a ring composition and those al-Qarṭājannī mentions for the structure of a poem. First, the beginning of the text needs to be attractive and to introduce the general theme of the poem. Second, there should be a relationship between the prologue and the epilogue of the poem. Third, there should be a sign of the beginning and the end of each passage. Finally, there is a microcosm – macrocosm relationship between the whole and the parts of the poem. Nevertheless, there is a difference between Douglas's ring composition and al-Qarṭājannī's conception of the poetic structure, which is that al-Qarṭājannī does not regard a poem as two halves and a middle in the way Douglas does. He regards a poem as a sequence of liaised passages, consisting of a sequence of liaised lines without showing particular privilege or importance to the middle of the poem nor to the middle of each passage.

Let us put the comparison between *al-tanāsub* and parallelism into practice by looking again at Shakespeare's sonnet that Jakobson analyzes, but this time we shall use al-Qarṭājannī's terminology. We can say that the beginning of the sonnet "the expence of spirit in a waste of shame" suggests its leitmotif, that is, to censure men's capitulation to their sexual desires. This idea dominates the sonnet, which ends frustratingly by affirming that this is an unsolvable problem. The last line ties up with the first one via a contrast between "to shun" and "the expence." Such a contrast highlights the problem, i.e., "the expence" and the unknown solution, i.e., "to shun." This link between the beginning and the end encapsulates the overall meaning of the poem; therefore, the beginning and the end form an example of the head marking and fetlocks marking, i.e., *al-taswīm* and *al-tahjīl*.

Furthermore, the two centripetal lines of the first strophe, same as those of the second one, are apparently distinct in their reiterated beginnings, which indicates that both lines form one unit sandwiched between the centrifugal lines in each of these two strophes. Therefore, the beginning and the end of these strophes are also examples of *al-taswīm* and *al-tahjīl*.

The transitions between the sonnet's passages can be described by what al-Qarṭājannī terms *al-takhalluṣ*, disposition, which is the gentle and smooth transition from one motif to another. This is achieved via the contrast between the salient "cruel" language in the last line of the first passage and the word "enjoyed," which opens the following passage. In other words, Shakespeare emphasizes the ugliness of "the expence of spirit" in the end of the first passage and begins the second one by mentioning the fact that such an ugly thing is, however, enjoyed. Also, the repetition of the word "mad" very well liaises

the end of the second passage with the beginning of the third passage, which falls before the last passage that lumps the sonnet all together.

Similarly, we can say about Puškin's poem that its beginning is marked by a sentence (i.e., I loved you) that implicates the general meaning of the poem by making the love in the past tense as a sign of the ended relationship between the poet and the mistress; thus, this sentence functions as a *al-taswīm*. The *al-takhalluṣ*, disposition, from the first passage to the second one is made smoothly by the conjunction "but," which creates a rhetorical contrast between the meanings of the two passages. As for the transition between the other passages, it is made by repeating the refrain (I loved you), which makes another example of *al-taswīm* on the passages' level. Finally, the end of the poem, "loved by another," makes a contrast with the reiterated beginning "I loved you," a contrast between the ending "I" and the starting "another." This contrast ties up the end of the poem to its beginning and summarizes the overall meaning of the poem; therefore, the end forms an example of *al-tahjīl*.

These rather fleeting analyses are only meant to show that the way al-Qarṭājannī analyzes the appropriateness *al-tanāsub* of a poem is similar to the way Jakobson analyzes the parallelism of a poem. Both critics look for similar qualities such as a contrast or an analogy between the beginnings and the ends, a link between the different strophes/passages of the poem, which may be achieved via the use of grammatical devices such as "but," and/or words such as "mad," and how such phenomena relate to the meaning of the text.

From another angle, *al-tanāsub* and parallelism are similar in terms of their psychological dimensions upon which both al-Qarṭājannī and Jakobson stress. On the one

hand, al-Qarṭājannī compares the appropriateness of a poem to the smoothness of a road, just as the walker enjoys the latter, the psyche enjoys the former; hence, the appropriateness of the poetic structure entertains the ego of the audience. Jakobson, on the other hand, understands parallelism as the factory of “poeticity,” or “poetic effect,” because it mirrors the parallelistic mode in which the brain works; thus, it satisfies the brain and evokes feelings in the audience’s psyche. However, this psychological effect seems to be an ultimate aim for Jakobson but it is only a means to another moral aim, i.e., to entice the psyche to adopt the good and avoid the evil, in al-Qarṭājannī’s theory.

Hence, there is a strong similarity between al-Qarṭājannī’s and Jakobson’s approaches to the study of poetry. Notwithstanding, there is a focal difference between the way al-Qarṭājannī theorizes *al-tanāsub* and the way Jakobson understands parallelism. For, al-Qarṭājannī conceives of *al-tanāsub* as a set of rules for *al-naẓm* that poets should attempt to utilize in their compositions to produce eloquent poems, but Jakobson conceives of parallelism as an inherent feature of literary works. There are no rules that limit or define what could count as parallelism and what could not; thus, any verbal act in which the poetic function dominates would be necessarily composed of “selection” and “combination” based on equivalence, i.e., parallelism. That said, al-Qarṭājannī may criticize a poem for lacking *al-tanāsub* and thus being less eloquent than it could have otherwise been, he actually does so for a part of a poem (277); but Jakobson would not, I would claim, accept that there could be a poem that does not have parallelism, so there is no poem that is not poetic. Therefore, we can describe al-Qarṭājannī’s discussion of *al-tanāsub* as both descriptive and prescriptive; so, it is critical; however, Jakobson’s discussion of parallelism is almost solely descriptive; thus, it is not critical but just analytical.

This difference informs us of another profound and more important difference between both theories, a difference that concerns “meaning.” For, the prescriptive nature of *al-tanāsub*, on the one hand, implies that it is something to be acquired or it could be missed; so critics should study and teach it and poets need to learn it in order to compose eloquent poetry. However, the descriptive nature of Jakobson’s parallelism, on the other hand, implies that it is something natural and innate in literature, especially poetry; thus, it should be analyzed so we can sense the aesthetics and the poeticity of the text. Hence, al-Qarṭājannī’s eloquence needs to be sought and achieved, but Jakobson’s poeticity needs not be sought (by the poet) inasmuch as it comes already built-in poetry.

Based on our previous discussions, if we regard “eloquence” as al-Qarṭājannī’s conception of the meaning that results from an appropriate structure, and “poeticity” as Jakobson’s conception of the meaning that results from a parallelistic form, we can then say that, for al-Qarṭājannī, meaning happens when the arrangement follows the methods of appropriateness *al-tanāsub*, but for Jakobson, meaning happens automatically when there becomes an arrangement of a poetic message. Put another way, the meaning that results from *al-tanāsub* could be acquired or missed because *al-tanāsub* itself could be acquired or missed in *al-naẓm*; however, the meaning that results from parallelism is absolute and substantial because parallelism itself is absolute and indispensable for the arrangement of poetry even without a conscious knowledge from the author (*Questions* 292, cited in Culler, *Structuralist* 79). In short, in poetry, “meaning” is natural and immanent for Jakobson, but it is prospective and proportionate for al-Qarṭājannī.

The way I understood Jakobson’s meaning above is to a certain extent similar to Culler’s critique of Jakobson’s understanding of poeticity. Culler shows that Jakobson

reduces the poetic effect to the principle of parallelism; nevertheless, he never provides a method for such a principle. One can discover as many parallelistic patterns in a text as he wants because Jakobson interestingly proves that similarity and contrast, variables and invariants, and symmetries and anti-symmetries are all capable of forming parallelisms. Thus, everything can be parallelized with everything; consequently, the interpretation of the structure becomes free of any critical criteria. Culler rejects this and asserts, “reading poetry is a rule-governed process of producing meanings; the poem offers a structure which must be filled up and one therefore attempts to invent something, guided by a series of formal rules derived from one’s experience of reading poetry, which both make possible inventions and impose limits on it” (*Structuralist* 147).

Contrarily, Ḥammūdāh shows that the weak point of al-Qarṭājannī’s theory lies in that he restricts the poetic creativity by his rigid rules of *al-tanāsub*; although, it is well known that creativity develops its own rules rather than having rules imposed on it (*al-Marāyah al-Muqa‘‘arah* 465).¹⁷ The idea is that he criticizes the strict governing of poetic eloquence by al-Qarṭājannī’s structural rules because this breaks with the creative nature of art. (I think this criticism would apply to Douglas’s scheme of ring composition as well since she stipulates certain conventions to be followed, or else, a composition could not be a ring composition). Similarly, ‘Aṣḥūr criticizes the logical basis of al-Qarṭājannī’s *al-tanāsub* that requires a poet to model his meanings in a way that makes them as a cause and an effect, or a premise and a conclusion, or a case and an example, etc (365).

¹⁷ However, he then justifies such a phenomenon because of the condition of al-Qarṭājannī’s artistic environment, as explained later.

So, Jakobson's descriptivity and al-Qarṭājannī's normativity have their criticisms. One may thus infer that the two criticisms, by Culler and Ḥammūdah, indirectly criticize each other as well. The controversial issue involved here is about the rule of literary criticism: Should it be merely descriptive, or rigidly normative, or fifty fifty?

Whatever the answer may be, it would not be similar to the answer of one plus one equal two. The answer is open for discussion and different opinions since Aristotle (or before) until today. But I think our comparative critical discussion lets us realize that despite the strong similarities between the examined theories of al-Qarṭājannī and Jakobson, they essentially represent two different approaches to literary criticism, which also, I argue, represent two different approaches to the question of the poetic meaning: a descriptive approach represented by Jakobson and a prescriptive approach represented by al-Qarṭājannī. For the descriptive approach, meaning/poeticity is there in poetry and the critic needs to adapt his analytical skills to the different semantic networks of poems. For the prescriptive approach, meaning/eloquence is there in poetry that has appropriate structure; therefore, poets need to learn the strategies of *al-tanāsub* and sharp their poetic skills in order to compose eloquent poetry.

In effect, the difference between these approaches results from the different historical contexts out of which they emerged. al-Qarṭājannī was swimming against the stream, he was reforming what he considered to be corrupted poetic styles. He discerns,

وإنما احتجت إلى الفرق بين المواد المستحسنة في الشعر والمستقبحة وترديد القول في إيضاح الجهات التي
تقبح وإلى ذكر غلط أكثر الناس في هذه الصناعة لأرشد من لعل كلامي يحل منه محل القبول من الناظرين
في هذه الصناعة إلى اقتباس القوانين الصحيحة في هذه الصناعة، وأزع كل ذي حجر عما يتعب به فكره
ويصم شعره. (26)

I needed to distinguish between the liked and the disliked articles of poetry, to repeat my speech in elaborating the improper aspects, and to point out the error most people make in regards to this craft [poetry] so as to guide whomsoever my speech would reach his acceptance, from the contemplators of this craft, to adopt the right laws of this craft, and to alert everyone, who has a mind, to what exhausts [spoils] his intellect and mutes his poetry.

Hence, the author is worried about the erroneous understanding of poetry (the craft) in its production and reception; therefore, he wrote what he considers to be laws and rules to reform this poetic corruption, to guide his contemporary poets to (*The Method of The Eloquent Ones and The Lamp of The Literati*). However, this was not the case with Jakobson. Yes, it is true that he migrated from Russia to Czechoslovakia due to the political conflicts during the 1920s, which silenced formalism in general (Eagleton 2), then he migrated from Prague to Scandinavia to flee the Nazi army and finally he came to the US. However, his treatment of literature was not directed at reforming a literary corruption as much as it was an attempt to theorize what distinguishes literary works from other instances of language and to develop a linguistic approach to the study of literature in order to create an autonomy for literary criticism. Hence, the want to prescribe poetic rules that al-Qarṭājannī had is different from Jakobson's goal of his literary theory. This translates itself in their different conceptions of "meaning," one says meaning, i.e., eloquence is prospective and proportionate and the other says meaning, i.e., poeticity is natural and innate, even though both meanings are to a great extent similar to each other.

Conclusion

The critical comparisons in this dissertation concern four conceptions of “meaning” in literary texts. In my attempt, I searched these conceptions by looking at the formulation and the condition of meaning in the selected critical theories. A major similarity between these conceptions / theories is that they present “meaning” as a result of a process, such a process was termed *النظم* (arrangement) by al-Jurjānī, *التناسب* (appropriateness) by al-Qarṭājannī, “parallelism” by Jakobson and “différance” by Derrida. These terms describe the mines of meaning for the theories we discussed.

The comparison between *al-naẓm* and *différance* reveals that both share a methodological basis, which is that “difference” and “deferral” are conditions for any meaning to be had; however, they differ in an epistemological issue, which is the order of thought/meaning and language/word.

The comparison between *al-tanāsub* and parallelism reveals that both are quite similar in observing the mutual relationships between words, lines and passages of a text and in recognizing the psychological effect of such a phenomenon; however, they differ in terms of being immanent or prospective in a poetic text. *بسم الله .*

Furthermore, “eloquence,” “poeticity” and “dissemination and iterability” encapsulate what each critic argues about the condition of meaning. First, Derrida presents “dissemination” and “iterability” as conditions of textual meanings in general. Second, Jakobson presents “poeticity” as the condition of the meaning of poetic texts. Third, al-

Qarṭājannī presents “eloquence” as the condition of the meaning of texts and speeches that observe *al-tanāsub*. Finally, al-Jurjānī attributes “eloquence” to statements whose meanings are expressive and condensed due to the richness of the syntactic texture and/or the use of figurative language.

The Jakobsonian poeticity and al-Qarṭājannī’s eloquence represent quite similar conditions of meaning to which Jakobson arrives through linguistics but al-Qarṭājannī arrives there via rhetoric. However, the difference between both conditions of meaning lies in that poeticity forms the ultimate aim of literature for Jakobson; however, eloquence still forms a means to a moral goal, for al-Qarṭājannī.

One can also conclude that Derrida’s “dissemination and iterability” and al-Jurjānī’s “eloquence” are similar in that both affirm the multiplicity of meanings for a speech but such a multiplicity is disseminated for Derrida and hierarchical and bound (polysemic) for al-Jurjānī.

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For statistical textual analysis see,

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